MID-APRIL ISSUE, 1921
VOL. XXIX No. 2

ADVENTURE

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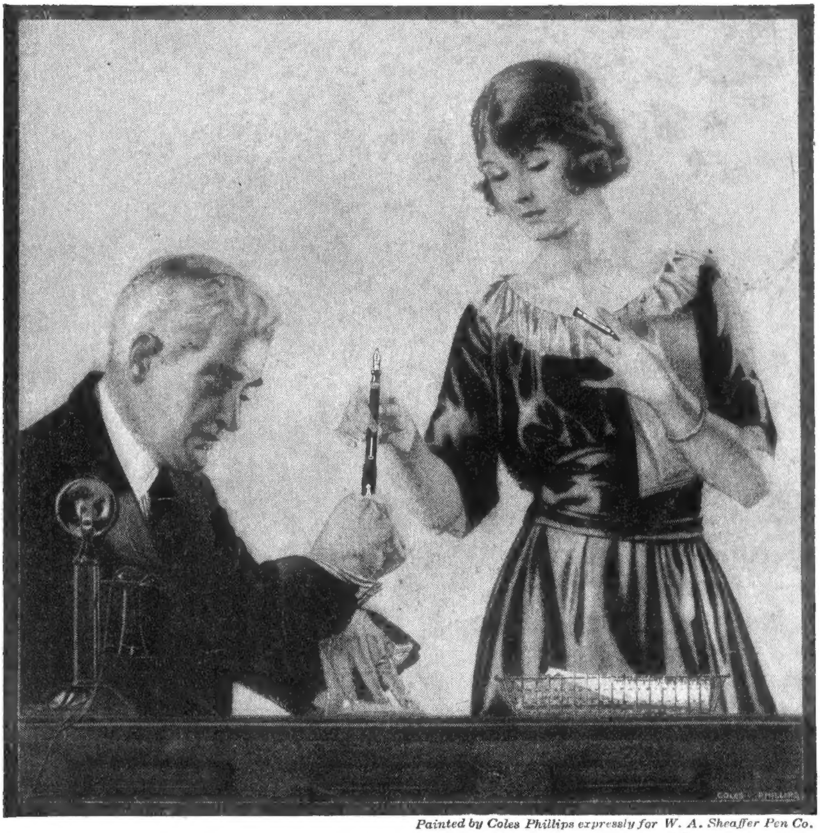

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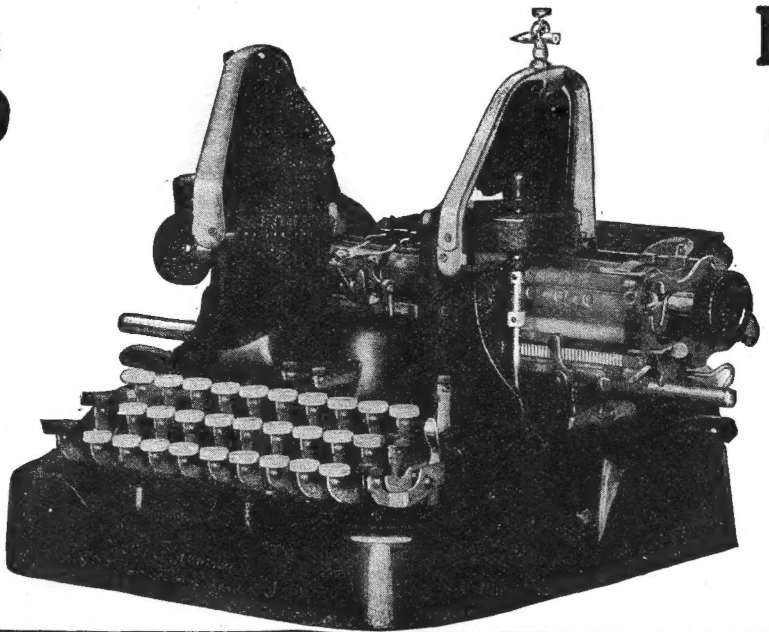

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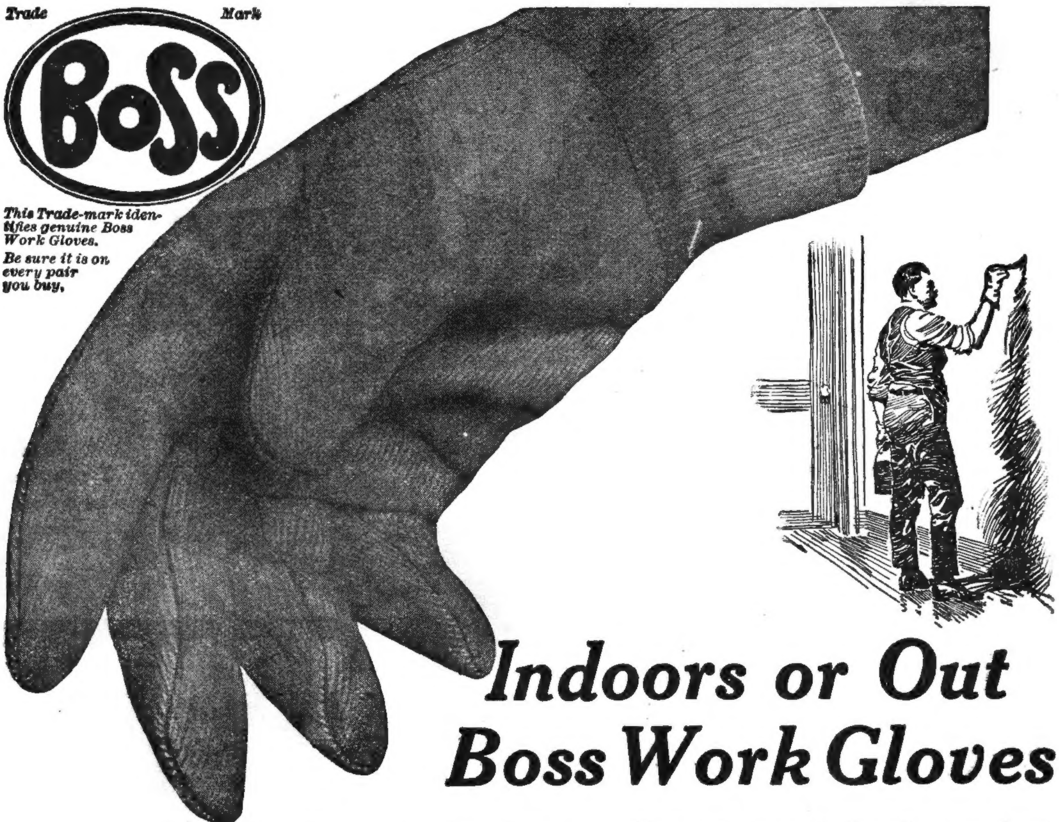
ADVENTURE
April 18th, 1921

Published twice a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 29
Number 2



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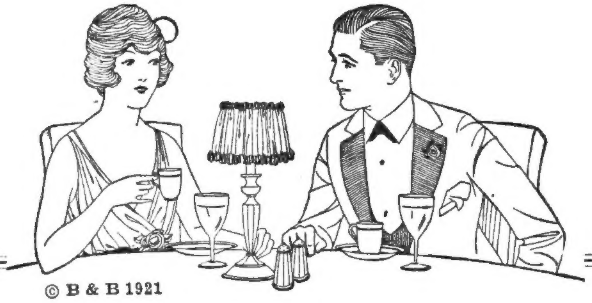

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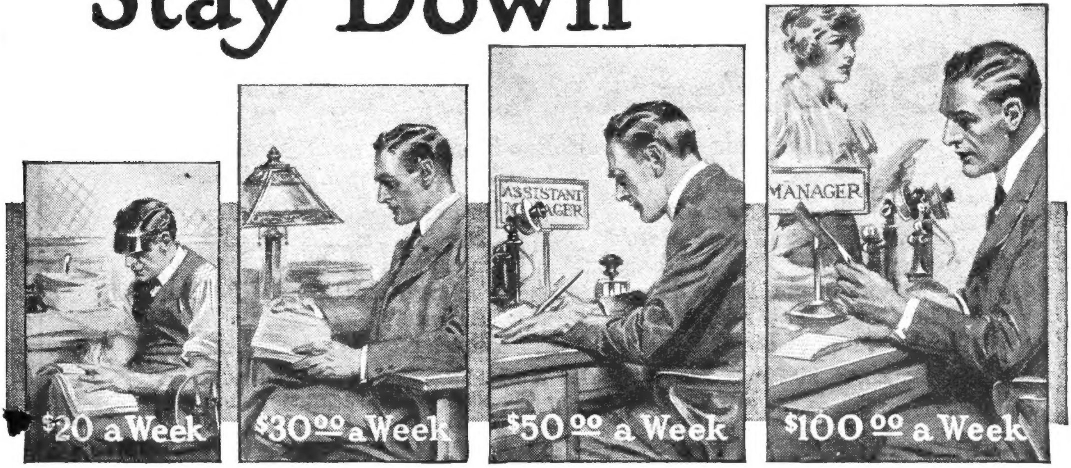

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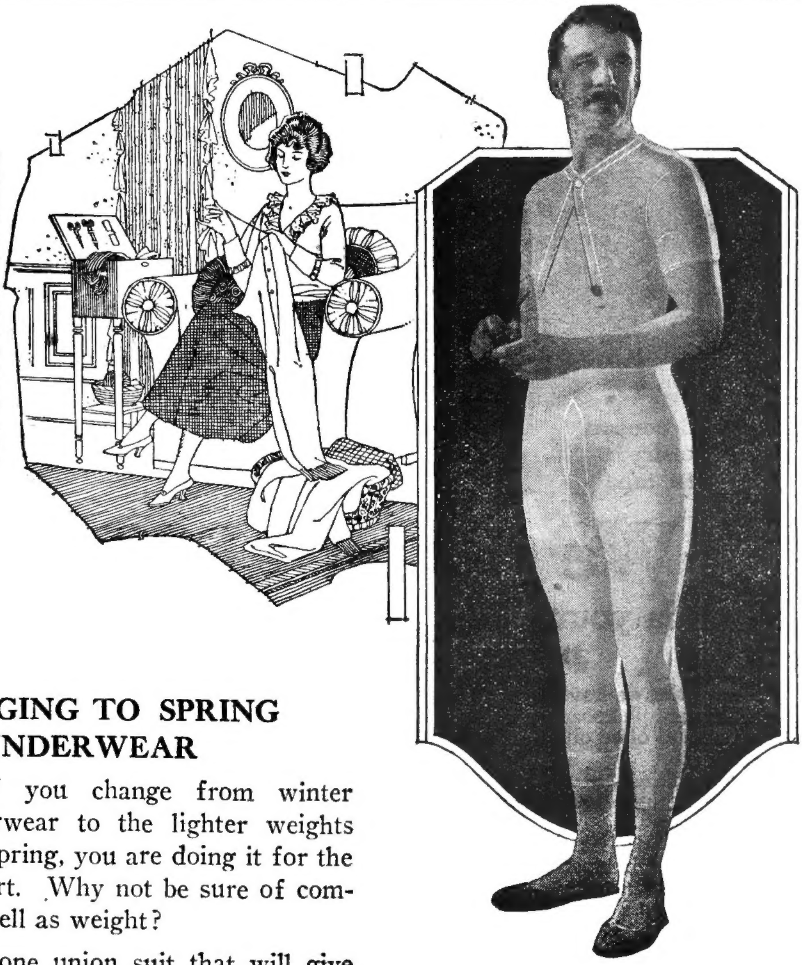

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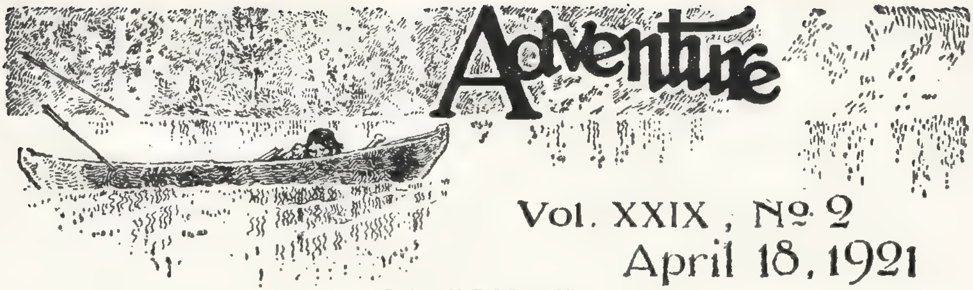

Vol. XXIX, No. 2
April 18, 1921

Registered in U. S. Patent Office

Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY
J. H. GANNON, President
C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879
ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $4.00 in advance
Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Canadian postage, 60 cents.

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Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.

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REVOLUTIONARY days in 1780, when Marion fought the British in South Carolina and men's allegiance was torn between crown and colony. "THE TORCH-BEARERS," a four-part story by Hugh Pendexter, begins in the next issue.

OUT on the Pacific things get hot when influenza, mutiny, Chinese coolies and Russian nobility start to mix it on the old *Sea Witch*, and the donkeyman proves that his title has nothing whatever to do with his ability or his brains. He tells his own story in "DONKEY-MAN AND PRINCESS," a complete novelette by Norman Springer, in the next issue.

IN THE cattle-country the mystery of the disappearing cows starts a war of extermination between the rival ranches. "THE DEVIL'S DOORYARD," a complete novelette by W. C. Tuttle in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Adventure
Vol. XXIX
No. 2
April 18
1921

The FLOATING FRONTIER*

A COMPLETE NOVEL

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Kings of the Missouri," "The Road to El Dorado," etc.

CHAPTER I

HARPE'S TAVERN

THE average home-seeker's ignorance of the country he would penetrate in the Fall of 1789 was amazing. Until the preceding year the migrations down the Ohio had been confined almost entirely to the Kentucky lands. Now that the Northwest Ordinance had lifted the ban from the country north of the Ohio the hive swarmed; and from far-away New England and Southland came men and women with their children.

The infant republic had kicked off its swaddling-clothes and was beginning to walk alone. And it walked in perilous places. After being in the Ohio country a round ten years, I could fully appreciate the chances the immigrants took in blindly consigning their humble household goods, their cows and horses, to flatboat or ark and floating down the river road.

The French had enjoyed an immunity from Indian attacks up to this year of '89 but were no longer favored. Negroes as a rule were safe, as they could be resold to the whites. In the Illinois country the few French were frantically demanding protection from the Spanish, the British, the Americans and the Indians.

The scattered Americans, largely soldiers of Clark's army, were clamoring for protection from the British, the Spanish, the Indians, and those of their own countrymen who were bent on ousting the first squatters. The many Indians were asking to be saved from the Spanish and the Americans, and at the same time were often being incited to carnage by Spanish agents. Half of a savage nation might be exchanging belts at the Ohio forts and ceremoniously renewing their hold on the chain of friendship with the Thirteen Fires while the other half scalped and burned on both sides of the river.

There we were: Spaniards, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Americans and Indians, each

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unit playing a different game, five crazy factors in a crazy equation. More tragic than the quarrels of the Caucasians was primitive man's effort to hold back the white man, with each race learning the worst qualities of the other. To heap up the measure of Trouble may be added white renegades, who did evil because of their degeneracy, and those river-pirates who surpassed the red men in ferocity.

Spain was making offers of free lands to American settlers, also freedom of religious worship if indulged in privately, a free market at New Orleans, and no tithes. Perhaps her most active agent was George Morgan, of New Jersey, who had founded New Madrid and who was bending every effort to bring Americans there. To force the pace Spain closed the Mississippi to Americans outside her own territory in the Fall of 1788. All American trade goods found below the mouth of the Ohio were liable to seizure, while the Court of Spain directed that the trespassers should be sent to the mines in Brazil.

The Indians took their prey along the river. Malaria and accident collected a fat toll. And yet they came, these home-seekers, a mighty tide rolling down the Ohio, their box-shaped flatboats swinging at all angles to the current, their huge arks drifting helplessly with pigmies trying to control the forty feet of steering-sweep.

Not only down the river did they come, but also over the safer route through Cumberland Gap. These last were journeying to Kentucky; and in place of one cabin in 1774 Kentucky now boasted of seventy-three thousand souls. Those who entered her wonderful domains by the way of Boone's Wilderness road found rich pickings even in '89; but if the sound of a neighbor's rifle made one feel he was being crowded, there was the Natchez country, or the all-important river port of Limestone and the gracious Ohio eager to carry him to unknown lands.

The Spaniards threatened and cajoled and seduced a portion of the settlers at Kaskaskia to cross the river. This theft of a people was possible because the General Congress had overlooked them and had permitted them to feel themselves abandoned. Offers of free land also won fifty families for Zewapetas, some thirty miles above the mouth of the Ohio.

Now that this immense invasion of the West was begun there were two opinions to be found on the Ohio: the Western people must make war on Spain, or secede and join her. Did they make war and seize the Mississippi they must do so without the backing of the United States. They could expect a war-belt and a hatchet from the "Far" Indians, as those about and beyond Detroit, along the Sandusky, the upper Maumee and Wabash were styled to distinguish them from the more immediate Shawnees and Delawares.

A general Indian war was not wanted. The bones of Braddock's dead were not yet buried. Without arriving at any preconcerted action the newcomers floated on the tide of growing events, just as they floated haphazard down the Ohio.

And it would please me immensely in writing of the mighty forces combining or clashing on that floating frontier to detail how I—Ensign Maxwell Broad of the United States Army, detailed on special service—had an important part in so grand a drama. I should enjoy picturing myself opposing no less a personage than the King of Spain, and all that.

In truth, my entrances and exits were rather insignificant, and consisted of nothing more spectacular than a matching of wits against those of the river-pirates, with adventures on the side among the Indians. While serving as an ensign at Fort Harmar on the Muskingum, across from the year-old settlement of Marietta, I was assigned for this special service.

But that no one may imagine my work to be trivial I will say at the start that the men I was after were as cold-blooded a gang of murderers as ever exterminated a helpless family and sold their loot down the Mississippi.

The red man might hold a prisoner for ransom, or adopt him. And I have seen men and women and young boys who were brought into Fort Harmar and Fort McIntosh by their Shawnee captors, weep and take on terribly on finding they were to be returned to their own people. Aye, and not a few of them escaped us and returned to their red friends.

But the white banditti along the Ohio took no prisoners. Their code had but one maxim—

"No survivors to become witnesses."

Therefore if red danger can dignify a man's work my task was not cheap after all.

I HAD been directed on setting out from Fort Harmar to keep an eye open for a young man by the name of Fitzgerald, one of a surveying-party sent out by the Ohio Company who had failed to return to the fort. This man was in my thoughts as I passed the mouth of Brush Creek and swung out toward Upper Island, one of Three Islands ten miles above Limestone on the Kentucky shore.

All the way down the river I had kept a close watch of the shore, except when I swung far out to pass the mouth of the Scioto, a favorite lurking-place for the Indians, hoping to see him break through the trees and cry out to be rescued. The Three Islands was a much used crossing-place for scalping-parties, and from habit I watched them sharply as my dugout dropped downstream. Only a few years before the Indians had killed on Captina Creek, less than twenty miles below Wheeling, several boatloads of immigrants bound for the Kentucky region. That was where Catherine Malott was captured, and saved her life by becoming the wife of Simon Girty.

Now the red men did not venture so far up the river, although it was a short five months since they had killed Mr. King, president of the Ohio Company, just below the mouth of the Little Kanawha; and even more recently had massacred a band of surveyors and soldiers near the mouth of the Scioto. While my work was to clean out the nest of river-pirates I carried no road-belt from the Indians, and must take my luck with them as I found it. My orders were to be purely on the defensive against the red plunderers and very offensive toward the white.

The water was low this perfect September day, and my plans were to land on the Kentucky side and obtain a horse from Samuel Sloo, an old hunter and stanch man of mine. Next I purposed paying a visit to a suspicious spot back of Limestone. For there was no doubt in my mind as to the success of the gang depending on the work of its up-river spies. I had convinced myself that the outlaws' headquarters were somewhere in the vicinity of Old Shawneetown; and I hoped to strike the trail of a spy and have him lead me into the inner circle.

When a short distance above the narrow channel that made between Three Islands I swerved in toward the Kentucky side, and was startled at being hailed. Suspending my paddle, I stared suspiciously at the tip of Upper Island, and soon made out a slim figure dressed as a hunter.

"Come down here and take me off," peremptorily called out the figure. It was more of a command than a request.

Back-paddling to keep my position, I retorted:

"Not so fast, friend. Who are you and how came you on the island if you can't leave it?"

"Who I am doesn't matter. I can leave here, but I don't care to get wet. My canoe floated away this morning."

"How many other boats have you hailed?"

"Not any. I've been very busy."

"Aye? Busy with what?" I queried, working farther away.

"Burying a dead man," was the startling reply.

"Then I don't hanker for your company, friend," I assured the other, now convinced that there was ambush.

For one can not hunt river-pirates without being hunted in turn. Yet for a decoy the fellow was very bluntly spoken.

"Will you come down here?" angrily shouted the fellow.

"When I get some one to come with me," I answered, and began paddling rapidly.

My dugout had advanced several times its length when a rifle cracked, and a bullet tore into the prow. And the voice was warning:

"I have another rifle, the one belonging to the dead man. Come down here and take me off."

The language of the rifle permitted of no misunderstanding. With a plunge of the blade I swept about and made toward the half-concealed figure. My knee touched my rifle; my mind was active in estimating how long it would take me to snatch the pistol from my belt and make a fight of it.

As the dugout grounded the figure stepped boldly into view, and I was amazed to discover that my insistent stranger was scarcely more than a boy. A remarkably pretty boy, too, the small face having a skin any lady might envy despite its coat of tan, while the dark hair flowing from beneath the coonskin hat was given to curls and was of an amazing fineness in texture.

I dropped my paddle, grabbed up the rifle and glared at the bush-growth behind the youth. A shrill laugh of derision brought the red to my face while my heart gave an erratic little jump. The laugh died abruptly, and in a low voice of sadness I was informed:

"There's no one here but me and the dead man. Poor lad! I couldn't leave him for the varments."

My mind was no longer on the dead; they were all too common along the Ohio. Nor was I bothering my mind any about a possible ambush. What held my keenest attention was the delicacy of the stranger's features, and the gracefulness of the slight, trim figure.

"What's your name?" I demanded.

"Nancy Summers," she said.

"I knew it the minute I heard you laugh—knew you were a woman."

"Able to take care of myself," she warned, her brown eyes half-closing.

"I didn't ask to come here, you know."

"I know. But you're here. And I can look out for myself."

"No doubt of it. You've held me up with a rifle. What's the next order?"

The small face became very grave.

"I must be set over on the Kentucky shore."

Her voice this time was almost apologetic.

"It seemed a small thing to ask. I was angry when you made off."

"One does not rush in to answer every hail from the shore these times."

"Of course not. I had to use the rifle to make you understand I am harmless."

"Harmless," I murmured. "I don't know about that. Your eyes can do more damage than your rifle; that I'll swear to."

This wasn't to her fancy, and she stared at me coldly. I began to feel embarrassed, for my adventures in frivolous talk had been very few. So I said:

"Glad you brought me back. Hop in and we'll be going."

"You'd best come ashore first and see the grave. You may want to find it again."

New suspicions swarmed in my mind, but I fought them back, climbed the low bank and stood beside her. Her head did not reach to my shoulder, and I felt ashamed of my doubts. However, it was a strange thing to find a young woman running wild in forest hunting-shirt and trousers. There was a man's daring in the big brown eyes as she studied my face steadily and squarely to read the signs.

"Don't grip your rifle so tightly," she murmured. "I mean you no harm."

I grinned a little at this confession. She started to smile also, then sobered and said:

"He was a young man. I placed him in a crevice and covered him with brush and piled on rocks."

Two big tears rolled down her cheeks, and with a revulsion of feeling I thrust my pistol deeper through my belt and gently asked how he came to die.

"He was shot. Two scalps were taken. Must be the work of Injuns. Some of Bluejacket's men are out on the Wabash and the Scioto."

"Two scalps from one head!" I exclaimed. "They did that eight years ago when Detroit was paying a prime price for hair. Did you— Were there any belongings in his hunting-shirt or belt?"

She shook her head and continued crying softly. Then she added—

"There was only this rifle."

She gave it to me and I examined it, and on the butt found traced the name "Fitzgerald."

"He was one of the Ohio Company's surveyors. I will look at the grave. We feared something like this, only we expected it would be Indian work."

"But it is. The two scalps."

"That was to make us believe it was Indian work, providing the body should ever be found. His murderers overdid it. He was never killed on this island, but on the main shore. His body was brought here. Indians would never bother to do that.

"His rifle was left with him because it bore his name and would be identified. Indians would never leave a gun."

"Then who did do it?" she whispered.

"River-pirates."

"Would they dare work so far up the river?"

I pointed to the solid mass of green on both sides of the river, and asked:

"Why not? Where is the danger? If the Indians can fire on boats at the mouth of the Scoito and steal horses and take scalps in Kentucky and cross over the river what's to hinder white men making a kill up here, or within sight of Wheeling? Surely they can venture closer to white men than red men can. Lead the way to the grave."

She took me to a mound of rocks and stood with head bowed and her eyes filled with tears. At one end of the mound was firmly embedded a stout branch, and fastened to this was a piece of bark. On the bark she had written with a piece of charcoal:

> September 29, 1789. A young Man, mabe Named Fitzgerald, Found ded at This place on This Day by Nancy Summers.

"I will notify Fort Harmar and they can send men to positively identify the body," I said. "Now we will be going. I'll keep the rifle and turn it back to the fort with my report."

She readily agreed to this and we returned to the dugout. As I paddled across to the Kentucky shore she sat behind me and I made no effort at conversation. We landed about two miles from old man Sloo's cabin, where I would procure a horse and arrange some other business, which I would hesitate to entrust to any but an honest, loyal man.

I planned to talk with the girl after disposing of the dugout. She followed me ashore with a softly spoken "thank you," and I used up a minute placing the dugout under some willows. Turning to speak to her, I found I was alone. I entered the growth of red-maple, expecting to find her waiting for me. I was rather nonplused and much chagrined when search as I would I could see nothing of her slim figure. She had stolen away. Her "thank you" had been her farewell.

The wilderness can be as lonely as the ocean. We two had met in passing, and it had been her desire that we separate, to be as completely parted as if the horizon were between us.

My gregarious nature resented her withdrawal. For weeks I might meet only red men and suspicious-acting whites. Then to be confronted with an audacious, alluring woods enigma, to be insolently held up with a rifle and compelled to play the ferryman, to have observed tears in her daring eyes, and this unceremonious leave-taking as a climax both irritated and depressed me.

I told myself she was a strange creature at the best, what with her woods wandering and acting as sexton. But I had grace enough to be ashamed of the last, for the tears on her cheeks were all womanly. However, my business was not to be gallivanting around with forest wenches, let them be as tantalizing as they would, and without seeking to find her trail I hastened through the maples.

A BRISK walk brought me to a small creek and Sloo's cabin. As neither smoke nor dog greeted me I knew that the old man was away on a hunt. The latch-string was out and I opened the door long enough to leave the extra rifle. Then, going to the tiny paddock back of the cabin, I renewed my acquaintance with a black horse. According to my arrangement with the old hunter, I was always to find the animal waiting for me.

With my knife I cut the one word "Harpe's" in the bark of an acacia and at the foot of the tree placed a broken twig. This was more than enough to attract old Sloo's attention to my brief message, as he would know I had been there the minute he found the horse gone. From a lean-to back of the cabin I procured the saddle and shifted the contents of the small pack I had brought in the dugout to the saddle-bags. Then I was off on the second leg of my adventure.

A word concerning Abner Harpe, keeper of the rude tavern on the Lexington road to Limestone. There was a cloud of ill-repute about the fellow that kept patronage away. He did not seem to care for travelers but was satisfied to be surrounded by half a dozen rough characters, who were like the lilies in that they had no visible means of support.

Up on the Muskingum we had occasionally heard stories of wayfarers being traced to the tavern, where the trail was lost. Harpe always insisted that none such as described had ever put up with him; or he would readily admit their arrival and declare they had departed toward Lexington or Limestone. Curiously enough in the latter case there were always some squatters who would remember seeing the missing man several miles from the tavern.

I had stopped at the place in the Spring when Joe Ice was killed while skinning a wolf before his cabin door. As he lived within a mile or two of Harpe's the tragedy was charged up against the tavern crowd. I soon proved that the murder was the work of a small band of ambitious Wyandots.

At that time I had worn a beard, had given no name, and was at the tavern only for an hour or so. Now I planned a longer stay, nor did I have any fears of being recognized.

A leisurely three hours' ride brought me out to the clearing where Harpe had squatted.

It was spoken of as tavern, but the word should include a collection of log huts rather than one structure. In some of these huts lived the hangers-on. Harpe would inform one that they were transient and paying guests. But bona-fide guests were always accommodated in one particular cabin which stood near the slave-quarters.

The clearing appeared to be deserted as I rode toward the "guest-house," but before I had advanced many rods a colored man came from behind a cabin, eying me askance.

"Look after my horse," I commanded, dismounting and taking my saddle-bags and rifle. "I sha'n't want him before morning."

With that I strode toward the long cabin where I had eaten on my previous visit. As I reached the doorway a deep voice saluted:

"Wal, hullo, stranger. Where ye come from? Where ye bound for?"

It was Harpe; a big fellow with a bristling black beard that rolled down over his barrel of a chest nearly to his belt.

"I'm making Limestone, where I hope to find a surveying-party bound for the Little Miami."

"I 'lowed ye'd been here afore when I see ye making for the eating-room," chuckled Harpe.

Then quickly—

"But I can't 'zactly place ye."

"My first time here, or to this part of the country. Name, Maxwell Broad. Understood the nigger to say I was to feed in here."

"Blamed if ye don't look nat'ral! Surveyor named Broad. I see—I see," he mused, combing his black beard thoughtfully and eying me keenly. "An' from Lexington way, most likely."

"I passed through there. Come through the Gap."

"An' a stranger in Lexington, of course."

"Scarcely that. Found quite a few old friends there."

"I see," he repeated slowly as if pondering over something weighty.

I threw my saddle-bags inside the door, and he continued—

"Ye'll be wanting a snack an' a shakedown, of course."

"I'd like the snack mighty soon. I wish to stay overnight."

"I see. To be sure. An' ye was saying yer name was——"

"Was, and is, Maxwell Broad. Can you hustle along something to eat pretty soon?"

"Quite a parcel of woodsmen back from the Indian Shore staying here for a day, an' they've licked things up pretty clean, but I 'low I can fix ye."

His fiction about the disheveled rascals close at hand, although invisible for the moment, would have been amusing had I not known that each was a potential murderer, if not one in fact. His eyes widened as he told the lie and he stared at me intently, perhaps thinking to read my thoughts. Then he wheeled and strode away and began bawling orders to the negro cabins.

I entered the guest-house and found it furnished with a three-legged stool, several planks and two blocks of wood. Drawing the stool to the window, I sat down and gazed out on the clearing.

A man, as rough-looking as my host, slouched from a cabin, carrying a rifle, lounged along and entered the cabin next to mine. Another figure as disreputable emerged from a second cabin and followed the first. He, too, carried a rifle. In all I counted eight men come from their retreats, each armed with a rifle, each seeming to have no purpose, yet all converging at the adjacent cabin. I would have given much to overhear their talk.

Now came a bustling and a clamor from the slave-quarters, and the back door of my cabin opened violently to admit a parcel of dogs and two negroes. I shifted my attention to the men and at once noticed the peculiar expression on their dusky faces.

Instead of the irrepressible good nature of the African they were eying me with both fear and pity. Fear for something outside of this cabin, something that continuously hovered over their blighted lives, and pity for the stranger who had wandered into the trap.

When I managed to catch their gaze they ducked their heads and pretended to be very busy with arranging a fresh pallet of boughs in the corner, with improvising a table by placing a plank on the two blocks of wood, and with hanging my saddle-bags from oak pegs.

I began to ask questions, but they were too scared to talk, and with unintelligible mutterings hastily withdrew. They had wanted to talk. They had wanted to tell me something, but fear was in their souls. Ordinarily their curiosity would have kept them about me, but I noted that none of them entered the cabin after the first two departed unless some errand forced him to do so.

After a time Harpe left the near-by cabin and came and filled my doorway. Two slaves had just come in with a bucket of fresh water and some clumsy tableware.

Their master's presence gave them the ague. I could understand what a beast the man must be when the mere sight of him set their knees to knocking, while a glance of his cold eyes seemed to induce a paroxysm of terror. Poor devils! What must their lot have been, governed by the brute's ferocious whims. Now he was speaking, his drawling voice sounding round and full and good-natured.

"YE MIND knocking over some turkeys?" he was asking, the agitation of his beard suggesting an attempt at an amiable grin. "Those woodsmen critters nearly et me out of everything. Pretty close skinning."

I told him I was quite willing to bag some turkeys if they could be found near. He promptly assured me:

"Mighty close on. Ye can take a couple of my boys along to tote 'em back. If ye don't mind, of course."

"Not a bit," I heartily declared.

To help a landlord fill his larder was nothing unusual, only in this case I suspected that the fellow wished a free hand at my saddle-bags. They contained nothing the average traveler would not possess, and not a line of writing to compromise me. He was welcome to his search.

He turned to the two negroes, and they tumbled over themselves to give him attention, bowing and grimacing. He commanded them:

"Hyar, ye two; go with this man an' drive up some turkeys. Do as he tells ye, or ye'll answer to me." Fairly ashiver, they hurried through the back door and procured two long poles and waited for me to join them.

Now I knew it must be my saddle-bags, and was perfectly willing that Harpe should go through them. In the belt at my waist were thirty gold pistoles, each worth five dollars in the money of the United States. By no means did I intend that the rascal should learn of them.

I motioned for the slaves to lead the way and followed them with my gun tucked under my arm. If the turkeys were plentiful I would need no firearms, but there were other things besides turkeys in the woods; and I always loved the feel of the long Kentucky rifle-barrel on shoulder or across my arm.

The distance was surprizingly short. We were scarcely out of sight of the clearing when one of the negroes bowed low, pointed into the woods and, rolling his eyes, excitedly announced—

"In dar, massa."

"Charge them!" I ordered, whereat the two rushed forward, striking with their poles and raising a fearful hullabaloo, and sending a score of the big birds flying into the trees.

Now our task consisted of walking stealthily beneath them and knocking them off with the poles. Harpe had used a clumsy errand for getting me off the scene for a brief spell.

One of the boys swung his pole and swept three birds from a branch. The other, less expert, knocked over an old cock. They turned to stalk another roosting-place, but paused and tilted their heads at a new note sounding not far off. I heard it—the bleating of a fawn.

My first thought was of Indians, for once on the Great Kanawha when the Cherokees were out I nearly lost the top of my head by investigating just such a call. But there could be no hostile Indians here on the Lexington road, and I set the bleating down as genuine and should have ignored it had not one of the boys turned eloquent eyes on me and begged me to bag the fawn. I shook my head, for already we had enough game.

But his disappointment was so keen, and because I was realizing what a hell his life must be, I relented and told him he could go forward and make the kill. He stared at his pole and shook his woolly pate lugubriously. On an impulse I gave him my rifle and motioned him to go.

With an ecstatic grunt of joy he took the faithful piece and stole toward the sound. Regretting that I had parted with the gun even for a few minutes, I followed after him, armed with my pistol and ax, first having ordered the second boy to remain behind and tie the turkeys to his pole.

The bleating continued and was off to one side of the course the negro was taking. Then I observed that he was following an old game trail which he probably knew swung in toward his victim.

I loitered along the trail for a short distance and then struck straight toward the hidden fawn, the woods being comparatively clear of undergrowth. Ahead and on my left I could mark the progress of the excited slave as he awkwardly aped the maneuvers of a woodsman stalking game. Occasionally I caught a glimpse of his figure as he crept from bush to bush.

Ahead of me and on my right was the foolish creature so persistently betraying its position. I halted, not caring to get between the animal and the slave. The negro stayed his advance at a clump of cherry-bushes, the rifle half-raised.

The bleating sounded again, and I watched for the fawn's head to show. Instead I became a spectator of an astounding phenomenon. The bleating kept up, but the fawn I saw wore a coonskin hat and carried a rifle.

I might have decided that it was an honest hunter tolling game had not the negro at this moment appeared in half-view, his arms raised with the rifle extended, standing forth very clearly with the exception of his face, which was masked by a branch. The man in the coonskin hat ceased his bleating, smiled wolfishly and raised his rifle. I knew that he knew he was shooting at a human being.

But why should he murder a slave? Perhaps because the slave had a rifle and therefore must be a white man; and I knew now why I had been sent to the woods as pothunter for the tavern loafers. The excuse to get me away from the clearing was not so clumsy after all, and it was something more important than saddle-bags that Harpe was after.

The man leveled his gun and I aimed my pistol. We fired almost together, although I pulled trigger an instant the quicker. The negro dropped, howling tremendously. The assassin screamed with pain and staggered back behind an eight-foot tree. I had aimed at the hand clutching the brown barrel and had the satisfaction of knowing I had shattered it.

I ran to the negro and snatched up my rifle. A glance told me that he was not mortally hurt. Leaving him, I raced after the miscreant. A shower of blood-drops on the trunk of a beech showed where he had flirted them from his broken hand. I followed his trail until it grew faint, evidencing that the fellow had returned to his senses and was covering his tracks.

Returning to the negro, I found him on the ground, groaning at a great rate, his companion staring at him stupidly but making no offer to help him. I tied up his wound, a hole through the muscles of the upper arm, and got him to his feet. Helping him along, with the second boy bringing up the rear with the turkeys, we made our way back to the clearing.

Harpe was standing before the guest-cabin, whittling a big root into a war-club. He dropped the root and fairly glared at me and the injured slave.

"What ye been doing to that nigger o' mine?" he finally demanded.

"None of that to me," I answered. "Find the man who bleats like a fawn and you've found the man who shot your nigger."

"——!" roared Harpe. "Mean to say some one done it a-purpose?"

"Never a doubt. But I spoiled his hand. He shot your boy just as I got him."

Harpe gaped and spluttered helplessly, then managed to exclaim—

"I don't see how he come—why he wanted to shoot the boy."

He had commenced the sentence honestly, and started to say he did not understand how his tool had made such a mistake. I enlightened him.

"The boy had my rifle. Undoubtedly he thought he was shooting at me."

"Oh, that's too tough to believe! Trying to kill honest travelers within pistol-shot o' my place!" cried Harpe, his voice grieved and anxious.

"Well, he missed," I lightly reminded the other. "Knocked several hundred dollars out of your boy, though. And he'll carry a broken hand through life."

"He oughter carry a broken neck," was the savage retort. "Did ye git a squint at him so's ye can tell him ag'in? Point him out to me an' I'll show him how it pays to come ——-raising round these parts."

I shook my head and said—

"You'll know him by his left hand being smashed."

"Just my luck to have that boy die on my hands," growled Harpe.

With this sentiment he dismissed the matter and hurried back to his cabin.

* * *

SOON the eight men came trooping into the open. Harpe called two by name and ordered them to seek the trail of the assassin—peremptory procedure for a landlord to take with his guests!

As the two scuttled off into the woods the others entered my cabin, greeting me with curt nods. Harpe was the last to enter and gruffly explained:

"All my customers eat in this place. Ye ain't fussy, of course."

"Lord, no! I love company," I declared.

The meal was not ready as we must wait until some of the turkey was cooked. While we waited the men looked me over. Next they began asking questions, each taking a turn.

This was all natural and wholesome enough in a new community, but I quickly observed that there was a method in their queries. No two covered the same ground. It all savored of careful instruction by some shrewd mind.

First would be a careless question as to the state of water above the Sandy, or below the Kentucky, whereat it was for me to remind I was from Lexington way and knew nothing about the condition of the river. Then would follow some rough badinage between themselves; then an abrupt interrogation about some one in Lexington. I knew Lexington, also Washington, four miles beyond. I also had the advantage of previously explaining to Harpe that I had come down the Wilderness road and had made but a short stay in Lexington. So I answered glibly enough. More inconsequential chatter, then another shrewd thrust.

This was kept up for more than an hour, each line of examination serving to check up all I had declared concerning myself. Then Harpe lazily remarked:

"Any one seen old Sam Sloo lately? Just sent a boy up there to give him a message."

Despite my pride in my keenness I came within a hair's breadth of betraying myself. It was on the tip of my tongue to inform him that his boy would find Sloo away from the cabin, thus showing my Lexington talk was only a bale of lies. He must have noticed some movement of my lips, for he stared at me sharply and asked—

"What d'ye say?"

"I said nothing."

"Thought ye spoke. Happen like to know Sam Sloo?"

If I said, "No" he might accuse me of having Sloo's horse, although the hunter had promised the animal should never be taken away from the creek except as I rode him. If I answered in the affirmative I would be volleyed with questions and probably would entangle myself. If they knew I had Sloo's horse I could declare I had bought him in Lexington. I boldly replied in the negative.

Harpe pursed his bearded lips and mused:

"I see, I see. Wal, that's cur'ous. Old Sloo was in here for a snack ten days ago, an' said he was expecting a call from a friend. I'd swear it was yer name he give. Ye remember, boys?"

A prompt chorus of assent answered him. I concealed a smile at his slip-up in admitting his "guests" had been with him for ten days and indifferently replied:

"Never met him that I know of. Impossible any man should know ten days ago that I was coming here, because I didn't know it myself till three days ago. You misunderstood the name."

"I see. I see. Of course," he mumbled.

We were now brought to a standstill, and the silence was becoming awkward for its quality of tension. It was getting on my nerves, when a man next to the window relieved the situation by suddenly raising both hands and beating the air frenziedly, his long face convulsed with alarm.

A negro entering the back door with a jug of Monongahela (whisky) disappeared by falling over backward. The cause of all this commotion was a tiny bird that had ventured through the window.

I knew the superstition. The bird meant death for some one in the cabin within twenty-four hours.

To increase their alarm I said—

"We might as well have seen the red sign."

This referred to the belief that to see a red doe in a dream was sure death before the day ended.

"It ain't meant for all of us. Drive th' devil out!" yelled a man; and he hurled his hat at the bird.

Even Harpe drew back over the threshold and stood outside. Those near the rear door disappeared instantly. The man who had hurled his hat plunged toward Harpe, and the bird, now thoroughly bewildered, flew before him. Overcome by rage and terror, the man struck with his rifle and by chance hit the poor thing and mashed it against the wall.

"——! It was meant for Abel!" shouted one of the men.

"Ye lie, ye sheep-stealin' hound!" frantically roared the bird's slayer.

And forthwith he flung himself on the prophet.

THEY clinched in the doorway and rolled over the threshold, the man Abel now insane with fear and chewing at the other's throat like a mad wolf. Possibly he believed the death of his opponent would satisfy the omen.

With a howl of anger Harpe tried to pull them apart and Abel bit his hand to the bone. Harpe's ire seemed to expand his whole person; and, leaping back, he kicked Abel in the neck, sending his head against the rock that served as a doorstep.

The man remained motionless. His opponent crawled to his feet, cursing as he caressed his lacerated throat. Harpe thundered heavy oaths at the prostrate figure, then gradually cooled off and harshly commanded:

"No more o' this foolishness, Abel Tumy. Get up afore I fetch ye another crack."

But Tumy persisted in maintaining his position, and from the way his head bent to one side I believed the death of the little bird was avenged.

"Oh, git up, ye cussed fool," growled Harpe, his gaze flickering uneasily as it dwelt on the silent form.

I advanced and knelt by the stricken man. A brief examination, and I was informing the staring throng:

"Neck broken and the skull fractured. Either would have killed him."

No one spoke for a minute; then Harpe cried out:

"He brought it on hisself. He went mad like a mad wolf. It was him or me."

"Glad he got it," panted the man with the torn throat. "'Nother minute he'd 'a' got me."

The men nodded and turned away, strolling back to the various cabins. Harpe chewed his beard for a spell, then called out to the slaves to come and carry the body away and bury it. Facing me, he said:

"Ye see how it was, stranger. Didn't go for to kill him; but when ye're bit through the hand it's nat'ral to let out a kick."

"It was just like an accident," I readily agreed.

"That's it. Just like a accident."

And he mouthed the words with a relish.

"Not that any one 'll make any fuss over Abe Tumy's passing out, him being that rough an' onlawful. Yet I don't want folks to think I'd harm even a nigger 'less I had to."

Then he followed after his men.

Left alone, I went to the back door, hailed a skulking boy and ordered him to bring meat and coffee. When I turned back to the stool I found a lounger occupying it. He had entered noiselessly while I was at the door. He sat with a long rifle erect between his knees, his head bowed forward and his long yellowish beard concealing nearly a foot of the gun-barrel.

I waited a moment for him to give me my seat. He eyed me sleepily and yet with a cunning look in his weak eyes.

"Get up!" I exclaimed, stepping toward him, for his manner expressed a desire to be insolent.

He came to his feet on the jump and glared at me balefully.

"Didn't reckon ye owned this hyar stool," he grunted.

"Live and learn," I advised, seating myself and gazing out the window.

He shuffled about the room uneasily, and I guessed that his errand was to pump me. My irritation had made it hard for him to find an opening, and while he was cogitating the matter a white woman entered with a tin dish of coffee and a huge mug. A glance at the forlorn creature told me she ranked no higher than a slave.

She came to the table by following the wall, her timid eyes staring at the lounger, her lips parted as if about to voice fear. My visitor, still rankling over my reception of him, stopped his pacing and stared evilly at the woman. As she drew near me, sidling forward as if approaching a snake, the man yelped—

"Come hyar, you!"

"Waitin' on gen'l'man, Sim," she huskily reminded him, her trembling hand placing the mug at my elbow.

She began to pour the coffee and the man leaped forward and seized her wrist.

"Sim Juber, don't ye go for to hurt me," she wailed.

He gave her wrist a twist, wringing a scream from her fluttering lips.

"—— your ignorant hide!" I heard myself roaring as I came to my feet and sent my fist into his jaw.

As he hit the floor I caught him by the arm and gave it a wrench that brought his long legs twining in knots over his head. Kicking aside his gun, I finished by throwing him bodily from the cabin.

Resuming my stool, I waited to be served, then noted that the woman was standing with an arm across her eyes as if afraid to look.

"It's all over," I shortly said. "Get something and mop up this coffee you've spilled. Then fill my mug."

"Yes, yes," she whimpered. "Now he'll be bad to me. Now he'll be bad."

"So? Take an ax and stick it in his head if he bothers you."

"Oh, I dassent! He's—he's my husband."

With that she was off, only to come running back with a rag with which to wipe up the spilled coffee. She threw up her head with a jerk, her eyes dilating in fresh fear. Voices were sounding just outside the door. Next the burly form of Harpe crossed the threshold.

With shaking hand the woman mopped up the coffee and filled my mug. She turned as if to go, but paused to sop up more of it.

And as she worried the rag back and forth I caught her gaze directed at me in a strange manner, and a hint of pink showed in her thin face. And as her hand smeared out the last of the spilled coffee she traced with her finger the one word—

Go!

The poor thing had dared that much; and the moment my eyes fell on the warning she whisked the cloth and obliterated it.

CHAPTER II

THE ROAD TO LIMESTONE

THERE was no time to consider the woman's warning, for already Harpe was standing beside me while two boys ran in by the back door with fried turkey and a makeshift for bread, and a dish of Monongahela. Depositing their burdens on the table, they bumped into each other in striving to retire.

Harpe booted them through the door, then turned back and eyed me loweringly. I commenced eating as if unconscious of his presence.

"I come for Sim Juber's gun, what he says ye took from him," he said.

"Tall man with thin beard? The gun in the corner must be his. Man who lets another man take his gun away ought not to be toting one."

"My words to him 'zactly," rumbled Harpe. "But seeing as how ye done it, I opine it's yer fuss to see he don't do ye no harm. He says ye struck him."

"Rather a smart clip," I admitted.

"Blows can't be washed out with words."

"Meaning he'll murder me the first chance he gets."

"I don't go for to say that," was the slow reply. "But it ain't nat'ral that he should overlook anything in his own favor when he happens to meet ye. My best words to ye is that ye pull out from here afore sundown. Ye can make Limestone by traveling late, or ye can camp by the road an' make it early in the morning."

"I'd rather stay here."

"Wal, that's for ye to decide. I jest wanted to warn ye. I ain't got no control of Sim Juber; an' he's powerfully het up. No one can say ye was wiped out because ye didn't know what was coming to ye."

I admitted this was true and that I was grateful for his warm consideration. He hesitated and chewed his beard, wanting to talk, but not knowing just what to say. He was trying to make his manner appear friendly; and to encourage him I made some general conversation.

He spoke of the new settlement of Losantiville (Cincinnati) opposite the mouth of the Licking, and volunteered his opinion that it was a —— of a name. I agreed to this, and we talked a bit about Fort Washington, a big timbered defense built at Losantiville as a headquarters for campaigns against the Indians. Suddenly he switched the talk to old man Sloo, and I listened with a show of indifference as would be natural for a man who had disclaimed any acquaintance with the hunter.

"Cur'ous cuss," commented Harpe after some rambling talk. "They do say that more'n one gold-piece finds its way to him that wa'n't never earned by hunting or boating. Some even go so far as to 'low he keeps a lookout for flats an' takes word to the river-piruts."

"Then there are river-pirates?" I innocently asked, glancing up into his gloomy face. "I'd supposed that was mostly talk."

"So 'tis, I 'low," he declared. "Of course in a raw country like this, with every white man killing more game than five Injuns would kill, there's bound to be lots of murdering by the red devils. Some of them deaths is laid up ag'in' white men. An' of course there's some whites that's bound to go wrong. B'iled down, I 'low four or five bad whites is all that's hurting the river travel."

"You've seen service against the Indians?"

"I was at Fort Finney on the Miami in '86 when the Shawnees come in for the grand council. That was 'nough for me."

And he spat in disgust.

"The commissioners was so keen to honey the Injuns up that they had us soldiers cook the grub and fetch it to 'em. When we come in with the kettles the Injuns begin hooting at us.

"'Here comes the old women with warriors' coats on,' howls a chief from Wapotomaky. Then Wiendoohalies, one of their first fighting men, got up an' wiped our eyes an' opened our hearts an' cleared the road of briers with his belts; but behind it all was their laffing at us soldiers for doing squaw work.

"That was 'nough for me. I quit next day an' didn't feel clean 'till I caught two o' the scum barking a tree for to make a canoe. One was up th' tree, an' I brought him down with my ax. Then I shot t'other.

"Feller I'd axed would 'a' got me if the blood from his hurt hadn't dampened his powder so's to make his gun miss fire. I tried the ax ag'in. Then five of 'em come busting through the bushes an' I run for it, but lost the flint out of my gun so's I couldn't fight back. But that was 'nough of army life for me."

The conversation lagged for a bit, and at last he took Sim Juber's gun and departed. I spread my blankets on the bough bed and turned in. It was an hour after sunset, but as I did not care to risk wandering about the clearing after nightfall, and as I planned an early start for Limestone, there was wisdom in an early sleep.

Harpe was a villain and had surrounded himself with scoundrels instead of catering to honest trade. It followed that dishonesty must be paying him well. Also it was obvious that I ran a risk in staying there all night. Yet his desire to have me "pull out" indicated that I was safer there than on the road to Limestone.

I had no fears of being disturbed during the first hours of the night. Placing my rifle and pistol by my side, I relaxed and invited sleep.

BUT my thoughts persisted in turning to the people coming to penetrate the Ohio country. I could picture them hurrying by cart and boat, and many trudging along with the pack-animals from the most distant points in the country, all converging to some place like Pittsburg or Redstone. This very night many craft were tied up along the Ohio, waiting for the morrow's sun and the gifts the day held for them.

A thin stream of white settlers had trickled through from Maryland and Pennsylvania to the headwaters of the Ohio as early as '53. The importance of this movement consisted in its being a definite movement toward the West instead of the usual north-and-south migrations. The French-Indian War and Pontiac's War had slowed down Western travel, but could not entirely stop it.

By the treaty at Fort Stanwix in '68 the Indians gave up all land south and east of the Ohio from the mouth of the Tennessee—then known as the Cherokee—to Pittsburg, up the Alleghany to Kittanning, and, with a jump across-country, to the most western branch of the Susquehanna. The red men were to hold inviolate all lands north and west of this line.

Harpe had spoken truthfully when he said one white man would kill more game than five Indians, and there was no keeping the venturesome out of the country north of the Ohio. They followed streams that were completely arched over by the primeval forests. They attempted to make clearings where the light of the sun had never reached the ground since the forest crown was formed.

It was not until after Dunmore's War in '74 that the whites were permitted by treaty to navigate the Ohio. None of the Far Nations, however, were to go south of the Ohio, and none of the whites were to leave the river to go north of it.

And this night the trails and streams were alive with those hungry for a new home in new lands. They were coming through Cumberland Gap to make the mouth of the Scioto, following the Great War-Path, as much used in ancient times as any Indian trail on the entire continent. They were coming to the Ohio from the tip of New England and the most remote Southern settlements.

The movement was national, and one of the phenomena of the migration was the people's ignorance of the lands they must fight and die for. The impulse to move into the unknown West had vibrated the whole length of the Atlantic coast.

To solve the problem of transportation the flatboat had been evolved. Early travelers had brought back rare stories of the western country, but as to definite information the newcomers knew only that an immense area, densely wooded and very fertile, could most easily be reached by way of the Ohio.

Those fresh from overseas elected to build their cabins in the groves and on the prairies of the Illinois. Those already familiar with heavily forested regions in New England, New York and the South preferred the tall, thick timber between the Wabash and the Scioto.

During the first generation only a handful of all those traveling to help form the floating frontier would ever return up the Beautiful River. The demands to be made upon them, the toll to be taken of them, would hold them close wherever they chanced to settle. Their children were to press on to new wonders among and beyond sky-breaking mountains and along the King of Oceans.

But there must come a time when these new trails would be old and well known, when the descendants of the first comers would turn back toward the East to find the unfamiliar. This last may sound far-fetched, but although I shall not live to see the wonders of the West exhausted I know the time must come when they will be a-wandering back to the mother-land.

The country north of the Ohio was practically a sealed book in '89. The few clearings made by venturesome white settlers were not even nicks in the somber stretches of ancient woods. We who had ranged the country for a decade knew that the north country was threaded with Indian trails connecting up the Mississippi and the Ohio with Lake Erie.

Where Fall Creek empties into White River comes the old trail from Vincennes, also one from the Falls of the Ohio, and others from the towns of the Miami, the Potawatomi and the Delaware in the north. But where we of the woods knew these traces there were hardly any of the immigrants who knew a rod of the country on either side of the Ohio. Once they quit their boats they were lost; and they builded their houses and died, or were killed, or happened to live till some other isolated community discovered them, and thereby discovered itself.

What species of madness, or what marvelous faith, led these people to bring their women and children to such a wilderness was never plain to me. As I revolved it at Harpe's tavern that night I found myself surmising that it must be the part of the Great Scheme to place a superior people in control of a magnificent country.

Those who have pitied the red man and denounced their own race for ousting him from fair lands might take to mind the thought that came to me that night. Which was: For countless hundreds of years the Indian has had possession of the continent. He failed to progress beyond a stage of barbarism.

It is the history of all races that there can be no standing still; either ahead or down to the foot. Why should the red race be the exception to the rule? And while I'm no scholar I believe the Indian has had as fair, if not a better chance, to work out his destiny than have the lost nations of the Old World.

So as I lay on my boughs the riddle seemed to become clearer, and what had been a frenzy and chaos took on shape and purpose. The white race was to be given a chance where the red race had failed. Men would not stick to this new country unless they had something along with them worth dying for.

And those first women! It was not the male who conquered the Indians and their country. For when the male goes forth alone he fraternizes, is always on the move, and builds nothing lasting. He satisfies his curiosity, loots or loafs, and the chapter's closed.

It was the Ohio women who held their men to the work. Many of them were delicately reared, women of genuine culture and piety. The quality of spirit that induced them to brave all, endure all, may be difficult for a less rugged age to understand. But whatever the coming generations shall accomplish will be due to the part played by those splendid first matrons of the nation.

I DOZED off while busy with these thoughts and dreamed that a woman, a most dramatic figure and seeming to type the womanhood ever floating down the river, was talking to me. When I came out of my sleep I was amazed that the voice should persist. I pinched myself to dismiss the spell, and yet the voice continued in my ear: "Wake up! Wake up!"

The room was dark and the affair was most mysterious. The voice was whispering in my left ear, and that side of my head was close to the log wall. The warning came again in an agony of despair. At last I softly replied:

"Well, I am awake. What of it? Who are you?"

"Thank God!" the voice fervently whispered. "I'm here jest outside th' cabin. I've poked a hole through th' moss. I'm Sim Juber's wife."

Remaining perfectly quiet, I murmured—

"What do you want to tell me?"

"They've been to the cabin o' the man called Sloo. Their business must 'a' been bloody, for they fetched back a new rifle; an' from their talk I 'low they must 'a' kilt him. Ye'll be the next. Sneak out an' git yer hoss an' go. For ——'s sake quit this hyar place now!"

"Tell me if Harpe and these men belong to the band of river-pirates," I urged.

She whispered, and moaned:

"I dassent say nothin'. Ye spoke kind to me. I'm hankerin' to pay back. They'll never let ye quit here alive. Oh! Oh! Lawd save us all!"

There was an indescribable despair in the last outcry. I called to her, but she did not answer. Then I heard steps shuffling toward my cabin, next the sound of voices. I got to my feet and picked up my rifle and pistol.

The approach was in no way stealthy, and I could not understand their motive. Blood was nothing to them; but why kill openly when they could kill secretly? Open murder with the white woman and the slaves as probable witnesses was an unnecessary risk.

The woman's statement about Sloo filled me with horror and rage, although now I had no time to dwell upon it. He had served the cause of justice well. That he should fall because of his work for me, however, was a cruel blow.

But already feet were shuffling across the threshold. I sang out:

"Halt! Who comes?"

"Awake, be ye, Mr. Broad?" answered Harpe. "Wait a jiffy till I git a light."

I did not reply but glided across the room. His intentions were honest so far as the light was concerned as was shown by the click of steel and flint, then a tiny glow as the flame took hold of a candle.

In a few moments the dim light grew and revealed four men standing by the door. Harpe was the only one armed, and he held a rifle.

"Well, what is it?" I asked, watching him narrowly.

"Bad business," Harpe gravely informed me, advancing.

I held my gun at my side with my hand on my pistol. If he considered my attitude as being suspicious he did not show it. Instead he extended the rifle, butt first, and asked—

"Ever see that gun afore?"

Keeping one eye on him, I glanced down, saw the name "Fitzgerald" on the butt and replied:

"I can't say. But there's a surveyor named Fitzgerald missing from Fort Harmar. It must be his gun. Where did you get it?"

"Alongside the dead body o' old man Sloo. Boys found him ten miles from here in the woods. Two sculps took from his head. Injuns must be out on this side."

"Killed and scalped. A hunter named Sloo," I mumbled. "But how came he with this rifle?"

"If a man by that name's missing it would look like old Sloo done for him."

It hurt me to let even this villain accuse the old man of crime without my openly resenting it. Remembering my rôle, I said—

"It would look so; but why wake me up?"

"——!" yelped Harpe. "Ain't it nat'ral to wake folks up when we find a white man sculped, an' him having a gun with another feller's name on it? Or be ye from some neck o' the woods where such things don't fuss ye any?"

"No use spoiling a man's sleep just to tell him a bloody piece of news," I complained. "You could have waited till morning."

"Wal, I'll be ——!" exclaimed Harpe, taking the gun and backing away. "Ye're a cool bird. I'll say that much for ye."

"I'm sleepy," I yawned.

With an attempt at righteous indignation Harpe bellowed:

"See here, Mr. Man, I don't like yer ways. Ye're a stranger to me, an' I don't take to yer cold-blooded way o' looking at things. I 'low ye'll be leaving this place smart an' early."

"I reckon so. How's the man with the smashed hand? The fellow who tried to shoot me?"

There was an ominous shuffling of feet by the door. Harpe was incapable of speech for a few moments. When he did reply his voice was husky with suppressed rage.

"We took yer word for what happened in the woods," he said. "But my nigger boys tell a different story. They 'low ye shot him with yer pistol. As he's a nigger I let it go as being a mistake.

"We ain't seen no man with a busted hand. An' seeing as how my nigger's dropped several hundred dollars in value I ain't keen to have much talk about it."

"Your boy will say what you tell him to," I replied. "If you really believed I shot him by accident you'd be after me to buy him. I'm willing to take the boy with you and your friends to Limestone and put the whole case up to Colonel Boone to decide. He's a very worthy gentleman, and I believe he is at Limestone now."

But Harpe had no liking for this suggestion. Colonel Boone was the last man he would select as a referee. He promptly answered:

"I've already dropped that business. Ye're the one to bring it up. I ain't any time to go ramshackling off to Limestone.

"I'd 'a' said nothing if ye hadn't spoke about a white man trying to shoot ye. Sounds like ye was almost trying to make me figger in it."

"Well, well. We've both spoken hastily," I soothed. "Suppose we call it quits."

He stared at me for nearly a minute, his eyes troubled and angry. Then he abruptly agreed:

"Ye're right. Talk don't mend but mighty few things. Sorry to 'a' busted up yer rest.

"Only one thing I can't understand, howsomever. How'd ye happen to know a feller named Fitzgerald was missing from Fort Harmar when ye're fresh from Lexington?"

"Easy," I said with a smile. "I'm a surveyor. Fitzgerald was a surveyor. I had heard his name mentioned at Lexington, and, being in the same line of work, I asked about him. I was told he had dropped out of sight."

Harpe shook his shaggy head dubiously and muttered:

"Danged cur'ous how news can go from the river to Lexington an' skip this clearing. Wal, we'll leave ye. Come on, boys."

I extinguished the candle and listened at the window until positive that they all had retired. As I turned back to my couch two conclusions were forming in my mind: Harpe did not plan to kill me at the clearing; he did not intend that I should ever see Limestone.

Had the attempt on my life in the woods succeeded it would have been pronounced an accident with the negroes to blame. Failing in that scheme, Harpe would now wait until I was some miles from the clearing. I was free to sleep.

MY GUARDIAN spirit must have been convinced that no harm would befall me, for I slept through until sunrise, when I was aroused by a colored boy coming in by the back door to see if I wanted anything. He was the one wounded while after the decoy fawn. There was nothing for him to do, and I suspected that his coming was prompted by gratitude.

I asked him about his shoulder, then examined it and dressed it with some bear-grease from my saddle-bags. He was frightened and yet anxious to talk.

Finally after glancing out of the window he blurted—

"Yo' go 'way dis sunup, massa?"

I nodded. He next asked—

"Yo' go Limestun?"

Again I nodded.

Drawing a deep breath, his teeth fairly chattering, he hoarsely whispered—

"Yo' berry keerful when yo' come to dat crick."

I thanked him and he vanished through the back door. Almost immediately he was back long enough to whisper:

"Dat crick berry bad. Water dat deep yo' go 'way roun'."

I waited impatiently for my coffee and meat, wishing to have a word with the white woman, but it was a colored girl who brought in the platter. I asked no questions of her.

Bolting my breakfast, I took my belongings and hurried to the horse-hovel. My nag stood with his head hanging in a most forlorn manner. The feed before him had not been touched. Puzzled, but anxious to get clear of the place, I backed him out into the sun.

A negro came running up and volubly

announced that the horse had eaten once and seemed greedy for more. Then with a glance inside he exclaimed—

" 'Clare to goodness ef he don' fool dis nigger! Ol' rascal had 'nough all time."

After throwing on my saddle I called loudly for Harpe, who at last emerged from a cabin. He endeavored to smile good-naturedly, but it was a ghastly grin.

I called for my reckoning and paid over the silver. He turned away as I leaped into the saddle and started to ride from the clearing. I quickly discovered that my poor beast was lame in the near front foot. Although deeply concerned, I gave it no heed until well down the Limestone road and out of sight of the clearing. Then I dismounted quickly enough and investigated.

The animal had been "string-cress'd," for I found a tail-hair tied around the tender part of the fetlock just above the hoof, where the short hairs dropping over the crown of the hoof would conceal it. Undoubtedly the negro had been instructed to remove the hair before I arrived.

I cut the hair but the mischief had been done. With the animal hopelessly lame the road to Limestone was doubled as to time. I proceeded to examine the animal's mouth, and while not deeply versed in horses I concluded that his teeth had been "greased," thus keeping him from eating. Accepting this theory, I cleansed his mouth with a handful of grass and polished his teeth off with whisky.

For several miles I walked and let the horse take his time and graze if he would. Whether it was hunger or the relish of the Monongahela in his mouth he did pluck up heart to crop some of the ripe grass.

As we advanced I kept an eye on the back trail and recalled the negro's words about Limestone Creek. There was my danger, and the poor black had said all he dared.

I knew the creek quite well, it being Simon Kenton's old stamping-grounds in '76. When within half a mile of the place I took a small bell from my saddle-bag and secured it around the horse's neck, and left him in the road while I ducked to one side with my rifle. He wanted water and I knew he would proceed directly to the creek. I scouted ahead of him as he was too lame to go at a gait faster than a walk.

I came to the creek without making any discovery; and, satisfied that if there was an ambush it would be on the other side of the road, I risked crossing the road and began working back toward the horse. As it was customary to tie a bell to a horse or cow so that it might be found if lost, I expected any assassin not to be curious about the tinkling and to continue stalking the road until I could locate him.

The September sun was very warm and the woods were close and "muggy." I halted to strip off my deerskin hunting-shirt and was in the act of pulling it over my head when a gun spoke and a bullet clipped through the neck. It passed so close that it stirred my hair. Dropping to the ground, I yanked the shirt clear and threw it on a bush.

The bell tinkled louder, and I crawled behind a black oak and endeavored to locate the enemy. I knew he was somewhere between me and the horse.

Time is no object when a man is being stalked by a murderer, and my relations with the Indians had taught me the virtue of patience. The fellow had started out to find me and I did not purpose going to him. So I settled myself comfortably and waited.

The bell tinkled regularly as the horse limped on to the creek. Some minutes passed and the bell ceased ringing, and I could picture the animal burying his nose in the stream. I had a poor opinion of the enemy's woodcraft, and therein made the mistake of underestimating him.

The minutes passed. There was nothing to indicate a prowling foe; and I would not admit that the chap could get in sight of me again without my seeing or hearing him. Behind me the bell resumed its monotonous chant, showing the horse had drunk his fill and was searching for grazing.

More minutes passed, and I ventured to stand erect and scrutinize my surroundings. Then I grew irritated and wished the game was over; this was not in violation of my patience but because I could hear the bell drawing nearer and realized the fool of a horse was wandering into the woods. I had counted on his remaining at the creek.

Suddenly I flattened out and could have kicked myself for a thick-headed dolt. The horse was lame and would not venture into the rough footing of the woods from choice, let alone leaving grass and water.

The only point of the compass that now interested me was where the bell sounded. It tinkled regularly and soon I heard the steps of the animal. At last I glimpsed his head thrust through a clump of bushes. Instead of pursuing a straight line he was ranging back and forth in a zigzag.

Then for a second I caught a glimpse of a face and a long, yellowish beard. It was gone almost as soon as seen, and it was much higher in the air than would have been the case were the man on foot. To sneak back to the creek and appropriate my horse and drive him through the woods in search of me was a real Indian trick, and from then on I gave the fellow due credit for woods cunning.

I changed my tactics and commenced crawling toward the horse. At last I got a good view of him as he passed between two trees. A long form stretched out on his back must be the enemy. Careful not to hit the horse, I fired and the figure rolled off.

The horse gave a snort and hobbled back toward the creek. I did not know whether my bullet had scored or not, but in event I had missed I did not believe it possible for the fellow to move far before I would have him. I swiftly reloaded and crept toward the spot where he had disappeared. What was my humiliation to have a bullet fan my face, having been fired from right angles to the course I was pursuing!

With a frantic flop I dived to cover and changed my course. Apparently the fellow half-believed he had hit me, for again I caught a glimpse of the vindictive face and recognized him as Sim Juber.

Despite my care I must have made some movement or slight noise, for his rifle leaped to his shoulder and we fired together. He went down with his head and shoulders buried in some undergrowth.

I used up ten or fifteen minutes in maneuvering around the body before I was satisfied that Mrs. Juber was a widow. I could have settled it by sending another bullet into the prostrate form, but somehow that smacked too much of savagery.

ROLLING him over, I saw that he was shot through the heart. What was a genuine surprize was the rifle he had used; for it was poor Fitzgerald's. Inside of twenty-four hours it had passed from the girl Nancy to me, from me to Sloo's cabin, to his murderers, to this dead rascal, and then back to me again.

In the man's belt was a knife in a worn leather sheath. I would not have paid it any attention had not the handle been exposed, showing the haft to be inlaid with silver and not a bit like the business-like weapons used by woodsmen. The knife was never intended for Juber's sheath, being too long of handle.

Drawing it forth, I was rewarded by finding Fitzgerald's name scratched on the handle. It was obvious that the poor lad had been fond of marking his gear.

The knife proved beyond all doubt that Fitzgerald was slain by Harpe's gang, probably on the Kentucky shore. His rifle had been hidden on Upper Island with the body, as it would be easily recognized; but Juber could not resist taking the knife. Why they had not thrown the rifle into the river was hard to understand unless it be assumed that some of the villains left it on the island contrary to instructions, intending to recover it when the search for the murdered man had ceased.

I drew Juber's body between two logs and covered it over with brush. Then, taking the two rifles and the knife, I hastened back to the creek, where I found my horse contentedly grazing.

His master was dead, scalped twice even as Fitzgerald had been. After my arrival at the tavern some of the Harpe gang had gone to the Sloo cabin. They had remained in hiding until he returned. To kill him without suffering the loss of at least one man had necessitated an ambush. Beyond all question the murderers had concealed themselves in the cabin, where they had found the rifle, and had shot him down when he opened the door.

Promising myself that his bones should be covered with the blood of some of his slayers, I mounted the horse, forded the creek and resumed my journey to Limestone. My horse was "string-cress'd" so he would go lame and delay me in making the settlement, thus giving Juber a chance to get ahead of me and in event of one failure to follow me up.

While my visit to Harpe's place had not resulted in the definite clue I had hoped to find, yet it had been extremely profitable. The collection of cabins was a nest of murderers. Whether these men were connected with the organized gang down-river or were operating independently, they must be stamped out.

I had hoped to strike the trail of some one man and have him lead me to the headquarters of the gang. There was much mystery enveloping the organization, due largely to its practise of eliminating all possible witnesses. Crippled boats were sure to be attacked as well as those moored to the bank during the night.

Those immigrants who hired professional boatmen—a type now coming into prominence—were much more likely to be immune from molestation than those who managed their own flats and arks. The professional would navigate the Ohio during the night in comparative safety. When he did anchor it was in the stream and not against an ambush on shore.

Of course moving craft even when under the control of veteran river-men were occasionally attacked, but as a rule only when carrying valuable cargo. This fact indicated that the pirates had spies at the various settlements along the river, probably as far up-river as Wheeling. The attacks on moving craft invariably took place somewhere between the foot of the rapids at Louisville and the mouth of the Cumberland.

During the first of the people's rush to the west the stratagem of a decoy was worked repeatedly. Several flats and one or two keelboats lashed together would discover a white man on the bank, his upraised arms a prayer to be taken off. This trick was borrowed from the Indians, who used their white renegades to play the part of victim. So notorious did this trick become that river-boats in '89 passed by more than one genuine case of distress, fearing a withering volley once they swung inshore.

Having marked their prey, and perhaps having an emissary on board in the guise of a boatman, the attack was planned for a certain point on the river. Once the craft was boarded there was no mercy shown old or young, man or woman. The boat with its cargo was then sent down the Mississippi, often as far as New Orleans, and sold for Spanish gold.

I do not mean by this that Spaniards entered into the terrible traffic knowingly. Among the pirates themselves might be found Spaniards, French, English and Americans.

I learned later that many of the pirates originally came to the new country as settlers, and had met with disasters until discouraged. Accidents or ignorance had made them despair of making homes or finding fortunes. So they turned about and preyed upon those who came after them.

There was no list kept of the many boats starting on the down-river trip. There was an entire lack of communication along the thousand miles of the river. Whatever word reached Redstone, Pittsburg or Wheeling concerning any family was the chance report made by word of mouth.

When a broadhorn or a keelboat started on its long venture it simply dropped out of sight. The Ohio received it. Whether the river passed it on to its destination or allowed it to be captured by Indians or pirates could only be guessed at.

There was no one to investigate when a family disappeared. Immigrants might start down the river with the declared intention of settling in the Kentucky lands, only to change their plans after drifting a few days and vote to try the Illinois country or the Natchez country; and again they might be induced to settle at New Madrid or in some of the other Spanish settlements. An avowed purpose of making any particular place meant nothing after a boat had floated from sight of the starting-point. Distaste for river travel would cut the journey short; a liking for it might greatly prolong the trip. When a family disappeared it went as a unit usually. So there was no one to investigate, as I have already said, and if there was the water-trail was a hopeless one to follow.

So my work of running down the horrible organization would be helped none by a record of missing persons and families. If such a record had been kept it would have included nearly all the boatloads of immigrants once they had reached the mouth of the Great Kanawha. In the course of months, years in some cases, the original list could be checked up as families were discovered along the Ohio and the Mississippi. Had I been stationed at Pittsburg or any of the up-river towns and been required to keep a record of all taking to the river I would have marked them all as "missing" until infrequent reports, or a chance word, could show an arrival.

I do not intend for any one to get the impression that any great percentage of the Ohio boats met with violence. Many more met with accident from snags, "sawyers" and "planters" than from pirates. The total of those failing to get through to their destinations can never be known, but it is only a tithe of the many that succeeded.

There were clues to river crimes which were conclusive, however—a boat, say, hacked and blood-stained, its cargo and people missing. If it were possible to know who had sailed in that boat their murder could be definitely recorded. When a flat thus gruesomely marked and empty of cargo was picked up we believed the gang had been interrupted in its plans and had rushed the cargo ashore and concealed it, or else had another boat along in which to carry the loot to the lower country.

My theory was that the gang would begin far from its base and work home. This would allow more than one try for an unusually rich cargo. This involved a system of spies up the river. The headquarters must be near the mouth of the Ohio to eliminate the risk of passing our forts and the few river settlements and to furnish a broad trail of escape—the Mississippi. Headquarters must be near some settlement, however, where supplies could be obtained and recruiting carried on. Old Shawneetown was a logical spot. Somewhere in its vicinity the pirates had their central rendezvous, I believed.

I WAS now a quarter of a mile from the creek and was completely taken by surprize when Harpe and three others suddenly stepped from cover and leveled their rifles.

"Git down, ye murdering cuss!" hoarsely commanded Harpe.

I promptly slid off my horse and stood with him between me and the four men.

"None o' that," warned Harpe. "Come out here an' show that rifle."

They were bent on deliberate murder now that Juber had failed to stop me. I took a step as if to obey Harpe's order, and, holding up poor Fitzgerald's rifle, asked—

"This gun?"

The maneuver seemed quite innocent and took them off their guard for a moment. And I added—

"Or did you mean this one?"

Now the two rifles rested across the saddle. It was stalemate. Did they fire they might hit my legs or my head, but surely not before one of my bullets scored a mortal bull's-eye. They began to work apart. I warned—

"Keep them by you, Harpe, or you get both bullets."

With a round oath he called the three back and fiercely demanded of me—

"If ye ain't ag'in' law 'n' order ye'll give in till this thing's straightened out."

"What thing?"

"Yer having the rifle we found by poor old Sloo's dead body."

"But you had it first. I didn't ask you to explain."

"None o' that. I told ye how we got hold of it."

"Well, I got it from Sim Juber."

"Then he stole it, which I won't believe. Sim Juber's a honest man."

"He is now, I believe."

"That's what I said— Say, stranger, what ye mean?"

"Juber's dead. Dead men can't be dishonest."

"Dead!" muttered Harpe. "How so?"

"Tried to pot me from ambush near the creek. Tell Mrs. Juber."

"By ——! this is too much!" roared Harpe. "Ye've done nothing but raise —— ever since ye struck my place. Now ye go a-bragging of killing a honest man like Sim Juber. Ye'll swing for that even if ye do shoot two of us down afore we can git ye."

"I surely shall get two of you," I promised, but with my heart sinking as I decided that the villains would rush me. "You'll go first, Harpe."

"Then ye'll soon j'ine me," he rumbled.

And I gave him credit for that much; he meant it.

"Throw down them guns an' we'll have six good men hear yer story an' pass on it. Try to stand us off an' we'll take ye dead or alive an' hang ye dead or alive."

I pressed the butts of the rifles tighter against my shoulders. I had selected Harpe and his right-hand neighbor. They could not kill me without my having time to pull the triggers. Unless killed or crippled, I would dart back into the woods and use my pistol and ax.

Harpe's eyes began to contract. I knew it was coming, and began pressing the triggers. Then two horsemen dashed into view behind the rascals and were at their backs, and I ceased holding my breath.

"What's the trouble, Harpe?" asked a man with long black hair and face tanned to the color of an Indian.

Harpe did not remove his gaze from me, nor did I heed his reply, for the second rider was the sprig of a maid, still wearing her leather tunic and trousers. I gaped at the picture she made, a little barbarian, wildly graceful. The man with her was saying:

"Well, well! If that's true such works can't be allowed. But he must have a reg'lar hearing."

"I've already promised him that, Hoss," cried Harpe.

The girl had been staring into my scowling face without recognizing me at first. Suddenly her small mouth formed an *O* of surprize, and I was sure that only the impending tragedy kept her from smiling. In a musical drawl she said:

"Wait a bit. All day before us. What you want him for, Harpe?"

"Stealing a rifle an' killing Sim Juber."

Her eyes popped wide at this intelligence, and she looked at me inquiringly.

"Last half is correct. I never steal," I said.

"Killed Sim Juber, eh? Come, that's not a bad day's work. He needed killing a heap. Whose rifle do you say he stole, Harpe?"

"See here, Nance Summers, ye ain't no call to meddle in this mess. Ye jest ride along," growled Harpe.

"Git along, Nancy," ordered her companion.

"After you, paw," she impudently replied, bringing her own rifle across her saddle. "If this man's stole anything I won't meddle. But the rifle? Can you prove property, Harpe?"

As Hoss Summers—and I was shocked to learn he was the girl's father—did not seem inclined to discipline his daughter, Harpe grasped at the chance she offered and eagerly assured them:

"Hang me to a butternut if the proof ain't sure! He's already 'fessed he stole it."

The girl leaned forward and nodded for me to begin my defense. I informed her:

"The gun has the name of Fitzgerald on it. Juber laid for me and tried to kill me. Then I shot him. He was using this gun."

"He lies 'bout Juber. The dead ain't here to speak for hisself," cried Harpe.

The girl rode her horse between the men and me and gently said:

"I believe he speaks the truth about Juber's trying to kill him. Let me see the gun."

She did not offer to take it, but leaned low and examined the butt, and for a second looked into my eyes. I counted three freckles on the bridge of her nose; then she was sitting erect with a fresh color in her face.

"As to the rifle I identify it," she quietly said. "I found it on Upper Island. This man set me over on this shore after my canoe drifted away. I gave him the gun to take back to the fort to prove the man's death."

Harpe stood as if stunned. His companions were similarly affected. Her story proved me an impostor, proved that I was connected with the authorities at Fort Harmar. She had desired to aid me; and, knowing nothing of the stories I had told at the tavern, she had signed my death-warrant so far as the gang's intentions were concerned.

"Ye gave the gun to him?" gasped Harpe. "An' we found it in beside old Sloo's dead body."

"You found it in his cabin, you hounds, where I left it and where you murdered him," I shouted.

"Clear the trail, Nance!" thundered Harpe, trying to get a bead on me, while the girl's horse began plunging back and forth.

One of the men took a chance of hitting the girl and fired, striking my poor nag in the shoulder and setting him to wheeling and kicking.

"Go, you fool!" screamed the girl, sending her horse against the group and knocking a man over. I leaped back into the bush with two bullets whistling after me, and ducked and quartered until deep in the shadow-depths of the forest.

I had lost my horse but had the two rifles. Limestone was only a few miles away and I could make it easily. Mine was the advantage as I was but one, a good woodsman, and under cover.

I stole back toward the road to make sure no harm was happening to the girl for what she had done for me.

I heard Harpe's heavy voice as he raved like a madman. I advanced more rapidly, fearing he might harm the girl. Then came her bell-like voice singing the refrain:

"King Cornstalk, the Shawnees' boast;
Old Yie, by whom much blood we've lost;
The Red Hawk and the Ellinipsico
Lie dead beside the Ohio."

This referred to the murder of the famous Shawnee chief by whites in '77. Cornstalk at the time was held as a hostage, and was butchered, together with his son, who was visiting him, and two other hostages. That brutal killing renewed the Shawnee nation's hostility toward the whites, which was to continue for five years after the girl Nancy finished the popular ballad there in the road.

Well, men needed to be men in those days, and their women reflected their environment. Perhaps their tastes were not always refined according to the standards of their grandchildren; but as her sweet voice sang the familiar words I found nothing crude in the effect, rather an uplifting of spirit. Now, satisfied that she would suffer nothing for acting as my champion, I turned about and traveled parallel to the road, putting my best foot forward to make Limestone.

CHAPTER III

ON THE INDIAN SHORE

IT WAS midday when I reached the collection of log cabins comprising Limestone, the port for those bound for Lexington. I entered the settlement in full expectation of meeting some of the Harpe gang, for I did not believe that Harpe would permit me to leave the country alive if he could prevent it.

I halted on beholding a group of men about the log tavern, but a second glance revealed them to be strangers. They might be some of the down-river outlaws, and Harpe might have sent word on for them to waylay me; but the two possibilities failed to intimidate me after I had finished studying them.

In the first place I had kept close to the road in making the settlement, and had not heard any horseman. Nor could I discover any of Harpe's men in the settlements.

What was more convincing was the clean-cut, sturdy appearance of the group. A man passed me; I asked him for Colonel Boone and was told that the famous pioneer was somewhere in the back country.

"And who are those men?" I inquired, pointing toward the tavern.

"From Louisville. Up here with Michael Lacassagne."

Luck was not entirely against me, it seemed, for next to Boone the merchant Lacassagne, one of the most prominent and influential men in all Kentucky, was the man I would desire to meet again. I first made his acquaintance in Danville in '87, when he was there as a member of the Kentucky Convention, leading in the fight for Statehood.

Now I saw him standing in the door and hastened to present myself. He was not a voluble man, as are many of French extraction, but much given to watching and listening. I recalled myself to his memory and was greeted with a warm smile and a hearty handshake. He made me known to some of the others; then, observing that I had something to say and was not saying it, he took my arm and led me aside, bluntly asking:

"You want something? To learn something?"

I bowed my head, and he continued—

"These are friends of mine, but we'll go to the river-bank where we can be alone."

I hesitated, then explained: "Some of Abner Harpe's gang may come after me. The river-bank would be their choice of places to jump me."

"So?" he growled. And, turning, he beckoned one of the Louisville men to him and said:

"My friend and I walk along the river. He thinks some of Harpe's crowd may intrude. You will discourage them, for your friend Lacassagne?"

The man grinned broadly, and readily assured the other—

"Not even a yaller dawg can git to th' bank while ye're there."

Safeguarded after this fashion, I accompanied him readily enough, and after he had lighted his pipe and nodded for me to speak I detailed my experiences at Harpe's place.

"Bad-man!" he ejaculated.

Next I told of Sloo's murder, and of my killing Juber. The first item brought a sigh. The second caused him to smack his lips and exclaim—

"Good!"

"That gang's convinced I'm trying to find the headquarters of the gang, and probably suspect I'm sent out from Fort Harmar. Where's their base?"

"Cave-in-Rock," he promptly answered.

I had heard of the cave once when I

visited the mouths of the Tennessee and the Cumberland.

"I shall go there," I said, yet wondering if I could reach the spot alive; and if I did how long I would live after making it.

"Do any of the gang know you?" he asked.

"None except Harpe and his gang."

"It's high time their bloody work was stopped. You go ahead and I'll leave some men here to stop any of the Harpe crowd if they try to take boat at this place.

"Don't go to the cave at first. Go to Old Shawneetown. The cave is about twenty-five miles below there. When they're not burning and killing, the pirates are in and about town. Mixed people there. Many river characters. Stranger not noticed much if he looks rough enough.

"Go to Old Shawneetown as a bad-man. Use your eyes and ears, but don't make any move until one of my men makes himself known to you."

"How shall I know him to be your man?"

He pondered a moment, then said:

"He'll say, 'The Indians are out.'

"You will ask, 'What Indians?'

"He will say, 'The River Indians.'

"Then you will say, 'Then they must be white Indians.'

"Now let's see if I've got it right."

We repeated the bit of dialog several times; and he next advised:

"Better get clear from here before any of Harpe's spies see you take boat. I'd cross-over to the Indian Shore (as the Ohio side was called) and touch at Losantiville. Spend a day or so there. My man should be in Shawneetown ahead of you. Don't try to pick him out. I'll describe you, and if he's there he'll come to you."

"Good advice, and I'll follow it to the letter. Do you know if Harpe goes down the river much?"

"I know he was down this Spring. But he's the up-country man for the gang and seldom makes the trip; usually communicates by one of his men. You'll want a dugout and some supplies. What else?"

"Fitzgerald's rifle and knife should be sent to Fort Harmar."

"I will see that they get there and will write a short report of the things you've told me. On your way down keep an eye open for Indians."

"Then they're out?"

"In small bands, yes. But a man's just as dead if he's killed by a small band as if by a big war-party. Old Shandatto, of the Wyandots, has again sent us a large belt of wampum with a black stripe running through it to represent the Ohio. They insist the river to be the southern boundary of the Indian country."

"But they signed the articles last January?"

Lacassagne smiled dryly and puffed his pipe.

"That's the Indian of it," I added.

"They've also sent Governor St. Clair a mixed belt—either peace or war. He knocked it aside with his cane and stamped his foot on it. Then they got scared and gave him a white string."

"Then they will stick by the treaty of January?"

He shrugged his shoulders and stared out over the river.

"Half of them come to your forts to drink rum and dance, and hold up the chain of friendship. At the same time their young men are firing on boats at the foot of the Falls. No peace will last that's been bought with presents. St. Clair knows it, and—this must not be whispered—he plans to lead a big expedition north of Chillicothe."

I inwardly prayed that I might finish my task on the river in time to join the expedition, little realizing that inside of two years I should have my wish, and witness one of the most bloody defeats and frightful massacres that the northern Indians ever inflicted on white troops.

"THE Scioto is a sore spot," I said. "If I'd not been detailed for this work I should have organized a patrol to cover the river between this settlement and the mouth of the Big Sandy. If two men started from Limestone and two from the Sandy on the same day they would meet at the mouth of the Scioto and finish the trip one way in three days' easy travel. Then turn about and return. The mouth of the Scioto would be patrolled four times a week in that way.

"My idea was for one man to go in a canoe, his companion moving a mile or so inland. If it was kept up until December we'd have no more killings at the mouth of the Scioto."

"Good! I'll arrange for that. Is there anything else?"

"One thing. About a man known as Hoss Summers. What is he?"

"Indian trader. This Spring he began hunting for a lead-mine. He says he has found one. He has brought in quite a lot of lead to this place and to Louisville. He's among the Indians a great deal."

"He has a daughter," I awkwardly prompted.

Lacassagne cocked his head and gave me a sharp glance, and I felt the blood showing through the tan.

"Softly, softly, my friend," he murmured. "That road may be filled with briers, and you carry no road-belt.

"Mark me, I say no word against the young woman. I have only seen her in passing. They say she is free to go where our woodsmen hesitate to go.

"But I say go softly toward that trail. Women are not plenty down here; yet one hesitates to take one whose father probably is a scoundrel—and maybe a murderer."

"You think he's one of the river gang?" I bluntly demanded.

Lacassagne pursed his lips, then said:

"I have no proof of that. I'll accept him as a lead-miner till I know different. I'll do that much for the sake of the young woman.

"They're not at the settlements on this side much. They were in Louisville at the end of the Spring rise, some time in May. There was—what you call it?—jollification. The girl stood at the window and watched them dance the 'scamper-down' and 'western swing,' and seemed liking to enter and be merry. Her father led her away.

"One of the young men—too much Monongahela—followed her and, after her father had left her, took her by the arm. *Psste!* Such a wildcat! The fellow ran like the devil. None of our young men will bother her again."

"But you know nothing against her?"

"Not a thing. I believe her father is bad company for her, but one sticks to one's father even when he is bad. It is so. God forbid I should say hurt of her! Still heartaches are avoided if young people know something about each other before falling in love."

I laughed loudly, and jeered:

"Love? Nonsense. I have no thought of love. I'm after the river gang. The girl has done me a service and I don't want to mix her up in it."

"I'm very glad to hear you speak so sensible," he earnestly declared, and my spirits sank. "I've noticed my men have turned two fellows back from the river. They may be honest, and they may be spies. I think you'd better start now without returning to the tavern. Less chance then of your face being too well remembered.

"There is a dugout at the point to which you're welcome. Go to it, and a boy will bring you a pack of supplies.

"I'll see to sending the rifle, knife and report. Your commanding officer is a friend of mine. My man will find you down-river. Good-by and good luck."

With a crushing hand-grip we parted, and I wandered down to the dugout on the point. In a very short time a young darky arrived with a pack of supplies, and in another five minutes I had pushed off.

Lacassagne's advice to make Old Shawneetown by easy stages was good, for this fashion of traveling would give me an opportunity to observe whether I was being followed, as well as a chance to throw a spy off my track. My first stop should be Losantiville, opposite the mouth of the Licking.

Above me was the mouth of the Scioto, lurking-place for red men bent on ambushing the river people, but soon to be kept clear of the rascals once my system of river scouts was adopted. A strong post there would have prevented a lot of deviltry, just as Fort Finney guarded the mouth of the Great Miami.

And yet the pests would have found some cover if every creek and river were barred to them. There was no safeguarding a thousand miles of river frontier beyond the possibility of some scalp-taking. And I was pleased to have the Scioto behind me.

The river presented a wonderful spectacle even to my calloused gaze. The high, firm banks keeping the current in orderly bounds were reenforced by terraces of poplar, maple, oak and nut-trees, with the willows in the foreground.

The hills, which had escorted the river from Pittsburg, spread out and drew back from the banks above Marietta across from Harmar, and the broad woody flats, or bottoms, between the heights and the stream were rich in game. Now the whole panorama was highly decorated with the paints of Autumn, but despite the gay coloring such a scene always held deep pathos for me.

TWO flatboats, lashed together, came swinging down the current and across my path. On the deck of one boat several figures were enthusiastically dancing the "half-moon" to the strains of a crazy violin. From a hole in the side of the nearest boat protruded the head of a horse.

Never was there a style of boat that mixed in so many strange adventures and tragedies as did the flatboat. Unusual combinations of drama were possible because it was the "family boat." Men in dugouts and keelboats had excitement enough, but such happenings must fall into certain grooves.

There was no limit to the cruel pranks Fate could play with a flat. It floated haphazard, first one end then the other being the bow. It drifted sidewise or even diagonally across the current. Two men at the steering-sweep, which was as long as the boat itself, might undertake to keep it in the channel; but as the thing swung stern for bow or drifted sidewise, navigation largely consisted in floating helplessly in a box.

The two boats before me were unusually large, each measuring a good sixty feet in length and twenty feet in width. The hull rose four feet above the water, and on this were upright timbers, four feet in length, supporting a stout roof of heavy planks.

At one end were the living-quarters, on the roof of which the dance was being enjoyed; at the other was the "barnyard," the entire structure being snugly roofed over. Access to the cabin was through a hatch, capable of being secured from below.

At the other end was a low door opening into the livestock's quarters. Not only were the voyagers happily dancing, but singing also. For now I caught the tune of "Pleasant Ohio," and a fragment of that popular ballad to the effect:

"When rambling o'er these mountains
And rocks where ivies grow
Thick as the hair upon your head,
'Mongst which you can not go—
Great storms of snow, cold winds that blow,
We scarce can undergo;
Say I, my boys, we'll leave this place
For the pleasant O-hi-o."

Poor blind fools! Fresh from New England, as their ballad proved, utterly ignorant of the dangers lining the river, they yet had heart for song and fiddling and dancing. And yet it was better so; for I doubt whether any amount of precaution could have saved them. I paddled across their wake and fell in between them and the Indian Shore

Now one of the men spied me and sent out a lusty "Hullo!" I turned the dugout toward them, wishing to be neighborly, but on approaching closer was loudly warned to "stand off." Their suspicions amused me until I saw one of the men nursing a long musket; and I remembered the average New Englander's preference for a handful of buckshot to an honest bullet.

"Did you hail me to get me near enough to shoot me?" I bawled, resting my paddle and scrutinizing the homespun-clad figures.

"Seeing you're alone, I guess you're all right," slowly decided the man with the musket. "You can come ahead if you want to."

I paddled alongside and was startled to see one of the men, a squat and almost misshapen fellow with enormous shoulders, pick up a sword and lean against it. Such a sword! It was much like one an uncle of mine in Maryland had brought back from some Chinese port—a two-handed affair with a blade that would measure a generous five feet. The entire length could not have been under six feet, and the handle extended a goodly distance above the head of the fellow who held it. No more fantastic weapon was ever brought into the Ohio country.

"Who be you? Where you come from? Where you going? What's your business?" asked the man with the musket.

"An' have you seen any Injuns in this neighborhood?" asked a woman.

"Just where be we now?" demanded another woman, this one brilliant in an apron with huge red dots.

I threw up both hands and begged them pause. They laughed uproariously, much like children; and I gave my name and my station and described my business as that of an agent for law and order.

"I'm going down-river to spy on the Indians and look for bad white men," I added. "We're now ten or twelve miles below Limestone——"

"Jumping ginger!" bellowed the man with

the tall sword. "Below Limestone? Why, we was cal'lating to tie up there."

"There's plenty of other places to tie up to," reminded the man with the musket.

"True, friend," I said. "But when not at a settlement it's better to drop anchor and tie up in the middle of the river. Our last report from down-river was that Indians were firing on boats at the mouth of the Kentucky; estimated some two hundred of them were on both sides of the Ohio.

"The river-pirates are very active and more to be feared than the Indians. Beware of all white men who hail you from shore or put off in skiffs and want to pay you a visit. Better hurt an honest man's feelings than to let the vermin on board. They will show you no mercy whatever."

"Oh, Law!" gasped the woman in the vivid apron. "Just think of it! Be we anywhere near them now?"

I did not smile; their ignorance was too pitiable. With the point of my knife I scratched a rough map on my paddle-blade and held it up for them to examine, calling off the distance between the well-known points. More detailed information would have been useless as they were seeing the river for the first time.

"Just where are you bound for?" I asked.

"We're thinking of working up to the Galena lead-mines," the man with the sword gravely informed me. "At Redstone we was told they was paying a dollar a day and board for men."

I did not doubt this; but I warned them that while the wage was about twice the Eastern scale they would find the cost of living much more; that they would have to buy much outside the man's board. The man with the musket frowned thoughtfully, then said:

"We ain't made no promises to go there. Mebbe we'll go to Kaskaskia, or St. Louis. I've heard they're both bustling places."

"St. Louis is small, and Kaskaskia is smaller. Beyond them there is nothing until you strike the Pacific Ocean."

"Anyway there's nice places up and down the Mississippi," insisted a woman. "Leastwise, so a gentleman named Mr. George Morgan, a Eastern man, told friends of ours that quit Redstun two days 'head of us!"

I conceded as much, but again had to be disagreeable by explaining that the Mississippi settlements were in Spanish territory.

"Wal, I'll be ——!" grunted the man with the sword. "See here, mister, you throw water on every plan we name. Now, my name's Emery—Josiah Emery. We folks are looking for some nice land to locate on. (Southerners would have said, "to squat on," and would have used "tolerable," or "likely" rather than "nice.") Know of any such spots along this river? We're getting pesky tired of this fresh-water life.

"We're from Salem, Massachusetts; an' when we hanker for water to sail on we want it salt. Got stuck on a island some miles back an' waited half a day for the tide to float us off."

"You'd better tie up at Losantiville. It's on the Indian Shore—right-hand bank—and opposite the mouth of the Licking. Stay there long enough to learn something about the country."

"Losantiville," slowly repeated Emery, dwelling on each syllable. "Pesky queer name. Don't believe I like it. But mebbe we'll stop there long enough to open our ears a bit. Much obleeged to you. Say, you can come aboard if you want to."

I THANKED them and explained how I must stick to the dugout and keep inshore and seek signs of Indians. In parting I warned them again to beware of all calls from the shore; to allow no men, white or red, to board them. As I paddled away they shouted neighborly good wishes after me, which I heartily returned. The last I heard of them they were lustily singing:

"Our precious friends that stay behind,
We're sorry now to leave;
But if they'll stay and break their shins,
For them we'll never grieve.
Adieu, my friends; come on, my dears,
This journey we'll forego,
And settle down on Licking Creek,
On yonder O-hi-o."

At early evening I would have entered Bull Creek to make camp if it had not been for the sight of two barked trees and a canoe on the shore. I quickly retreated and proceeded two miles down-stream. The nights were chilly, and as I went ashore the river was rising, marking the beginning of the annual Autumnal rise which would last until December.

With a devout wish that my flatboat friends would not lose their anchor or drift ashore as a result of following my advice and dropping their iron in mid-stream, I pushed my dugout up the shallow waters of a tiny stream until I came to the edge of tamarack and cranberry swamp. Here I knocked over some squirrels and broiled them over a tiny fire.

Hearing a familiar rustling in the woods, I scouted for ten minutes and brought back a fat turkey. I risked more fire and cooked some of the bird. Having eaten, I buried the fire and shifted my dugout down-stream and behind a screen of drooping boughs.

I slept aboard and found that my blankets were none too warm. Nothing disturbed me this night and I was keen to get away when the early light awoke me.

However, now that I was ashore it was wise to stock my larder. I had three pints of parched corn, some bacon and a considerable portion of the turkey. But I was hungry for red meat. The supplies taken on at Limestone were staples, and one could live on them indefinitely if compelled to; but when in the woods I always preferred the fat of the land. While there was danger of Indians happening upon me I was not apprehensive enough to pass by deer-meat.

The one canoe I had seen in Bull Creek meant that there were only two or three Indians in my neighborhood, and there was more than an even chance that they were honest hunters. Ordinarily we had little fear of any Indians living south of Old Chillicothe, although even those would frequently lift a scalp if the victim was alone. However, I was used to them and their ways, so I counted on bagging my game and making a quick retreat to my dugout.

I skirted the swamp and came to a gentle slope thick with magnolias. Here I was proceeding along the edge of this growth when an arrow whistled over my shoulder. I saw its long reed shaft as it streaked into some plum bushes, and dropped on my knees. I had deliberately walked into an ambush, and had the fellow's aim been a trifle more accurate I would have been added to the long toll of scouts, soldiers and immigrants taken by the red men along the Ohio.

I whistled sharply, as if sounding a signal. The woods were quiet except for some squirrels at play overhead.

Moving with all my cunning, I began slipping down the slope to the swamp. I was beginning to believe that my ruse of whistling had checked the Indian, causing him to believe there were other white men near; but a second arrow spearing into my cover warned me that the affair was not ended. Had not a twig deflected the course of the arrow it would have found me.

The second arrow gave me a clue, however, for the broken twig above my head indicated its course. It had been discharged from an elevation.

Moving softly, I came to a tamarack on the border of the slope, slipped behind it and began a study of the trees—not of the boles but the upper branches. Something moved near my feet—a brown rattlesnake; but I remained motionless, so the reptile made no move to coil but continued on his errand.

Cutting some cranberry sprigs, I slowly advanced them to one side of the tree and waited. As no arrow saluted this maneuver I ventured to peep through the screen. A squirrel chattered angrily, and I located the sound and inventoried each tree.

At last a slight rustle in a walnut focused my attention. It was nothing more than a squirrel chasing another might make, but it was not repeated in another spot as would have been the case had a squirrel pursued another from branch to branch.

Pulling out my pistol, I fired at the suspicious branch and was instantly rewarded by a violent commotion, followed by a brawny arm appearing with drawn bow. Dropping the pistol and aiming the rifle, I fired as the bow twanged. The arrow struck my tamarack and the bullet brought the Indian to the ground.

From up the slope came a signal call. I began running toward the dugout. The call was repeated; then silence for a minute, followed by a yell of rage. One or more of the Indians had come upon their companion, and my trail was like print in the soft marsh. They were after me hot-foot, and while I had a comfortable lead I would lose precious seconds in pushing the dugout down the shallow stream.

My one thought was to reach the Ohio, and if mortally wounded throw myself into the river to save my scalp, even as my friend, poor Jake Drennon, had done two years back. I struck the dugout on the jump and pushed like mad. Behind me I could hear Indians crashing through the bushes on both sides of the stream, calling to one another to head me off before I reached the river.

The long reed shaft had led me at first to believe that my assailants were Cherokees, although I had had no recent news that the warriors of that nation were out. Now I knew that I was pursued by Shawnees, and they would make every effort to close my mouth that I might not report their treachery at settlement or fort.

Now the dugout was entering the Ohio, and with a final mighty shove I sent the craft skimming into deep water, and threw myself flat on my face. I heard two bullets strike the wood, and when I dared to raise my head there were three arrows sticking into the side.

I expected that the fellows would swim after me, but fortunately they had no desire to take the chance. Occasional shots were fired as I reached the paddle over the side and drew farther from the shore. When it was safe to sit up I let the dugout drift while I reloaded rifle and pistol.

AIDED by the current, now about two miles an hour because of the rise, I paddled rapidly and had placed a pleasing distance between me and the scene of the attack when the morning supplied a second startling incident. It was the appearance of a man bursting through the bank growth and stretching out his hands and hoarsely hailing me. I was well out from the shore at the time. Smiling bitterly at the trick, I dropped my paddle and picked up my rifle.

"For the good Lord's sake take me off," bellowed the man.

Even at the distance there was something familiar about him; so, holding my rifle ready, I yelled—

"Stand up and come out of those bushes."

He obeyed with frantic haste; and as he moved into full view there was no mistaking the short, powerful figure. To complete his identification was the thing he carried like a staff and which reached above his head.

"Josiah Emery," I called, "what are you doing there?"

And I lowered the gun and began working inshore.

"Take me off, for the good Lord's sake!" he replied.

He could not be a decoy; yet, after paddling closer, I backed water and told him to swim out to me.

"But my sword!" he pleaded, holding up the uncouth weapon.

"To the —— with it! If you want a ride in my dugout take to the water. If you're from Salem you can swim fast enough. And you'd best hurry, because there are Indians up the river hungry for white scalps."

Muttering incoherently, he began wading toward me, using the sword to test the depth. I scanned the shore and could detect nothing suspicious.

I had known cases where white captives had been made to play the part of decoys. (And there was more than one instance where such a decoy forfeited his life by loudly warning the unsuspicious craft to keep off.) But Emery's case was genuine enough; and as the water rose to his shoulders I suddenly sent the dugout shooting to him and managed to get him and a barrel of water aboard. After regaining the middle of the river and pausing to bail out, I saw that he had undergone a great change since the day before. He crouched on his knees, his sword held before him, his block of a face haggard, his eyes wild and staring as he kept his gaze fixed on the ominous forest wall.

"Talk!" I commanded, finishing my bailing. "How come you ashore alone? Where are your friends?"

"Dead! Dead!" he moaned. "Oh, the good Lord have mercy on their souls! The sound of the axes was like some one cutting up beef."

"You were attacked!" I gasped. "How came you to escape?"

His gaze never quit the timbered shore, and his voice hitched spasmodically from word to word as he explained:

" 'Twas sundown. I was for dropping anchor in middle of the river—but the rope—not long enough.

"We come ashore. Me ahead in skiff—to find nice spot. Passed round point. Boat out of sight. Heard voices pretty near. Couldn't understand how the folks could land—so quick—me having such a lead. Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!

"I drew the skiff on the bank—and made across the point to see—what was up. An' there was banging of guns.

"Then— Oh, Lord! Why did you let

me hear that? The cries of the women! Can't ever git that outen my ears!

"By the time I got where I could see the river everything was quiet. Nary a sign of the boats nor my friends. The Injuns had got 'em all."

Notwithstanding my fight with the Indians up-stream I did not believe Emery's friends had been attacked by red men. The disappearance of the bodies, the vanishing of the two boats, did not smack of Indian warfare.

Having made their kill, Indians would have left the boats to be discovered, or left them to float down the river with their grim story. Or they might have burned them. In any event the scalps and booty would have been taken ashore, and Emery would have been gobbled up the minute he broke through the bush on the north side of the point.

While the Salem man was making his way through the growth on the point the murderers had finished their black work and had sailed the boats below the point. Had he returned to his skiff he might have seen them far down the river.

"No Indians did it. It's the work of river-pirates," I said. "To think men could do such a hideous thing for a few cows and horses!"

"One of the boats was loaded with iron bars and brass pots. We'd figgered on trading 'em," he groaned.

"Then from their point of view the pirates were well paid for their work," I said. "What did you do after failing to find any trace of boats or friends?"

"I hoofed it back into the woods and come up-stream. I was hoping to git back opposite to Limestone."

"Another proof the Indians did not do the job! They would have picked up the trail and overhauled you. If the pirates saw you coming ashore they let you go while they gave all their attention to the boats.

"Once they'd murdered your friends they hitched an iron bar to each and threw them overboard. This, while they were working the boats down-stream. You can't dispose of a flatboat inside of a few minutes so no trace will remain."

"White men—do such things!" he mumbled.

Then tears streamed down his rugged face and his high-strung nerves relaxed, and he mourned:

"Oh, Joel Camp! Mistress Jennie Camp! An' Mary James! Such a fate for to come all the way from Salem to meet!

"If only I'd been there with my sword! What must their last thoughts been o' me! That I was scared an' hiding! Oh, the pity an' shame of it!"

"They had no time to think of you," I consoled him. "One volley and it was all over. Your friends had quick and painless death. You must brace up, man. Maybe we can overhaul them and ——"

"Aye, aye! Overhaul 'em, sir! My sword will show its mettle. Just give me clearance to swing it with my two hands, an' I'll mow them down like they was medder hay."

This was the right spirit, and I encouraged it until gradually the horror of the tragedy was dulled by his terrible anger. Then he pulled his nerves together sufficiently to give me a history of the two families. It was the old story of folks in far-off New England succumbing to the fever of entering unknown lands and living on the fat of the land.

Their lives in Salem were peaceful and free from hardship. Nevertheless the lure of the "Pleasant Ohio" was too strong.

Stories of the wonderful region flooded the East. Much fiction was mixed with facts. Seldom were the details of ghastly danger emphasized. If an occasional traveler or soldier came back from the river he was expected to tell of marvels. His listeners yearned to hear about twenty-five-pound pike and twenty-pound perch and forty-pound catfish; about a land smothered with luscious strawberries; of inexhaustible flocks of huge turkeys; of the richest game region yet known to the whites of the New World.

So the desire for the new enterprise burned and family after family caught the contagion. From past generations they had received as a heritage the lust to wander and conquer primeval lands.

Each night families met to plan the great trip, to sing songs about it. Their speculations took on a rosy range unlicensed outside of fairy-tales.

Actual knowledge of the river or of the dangers to be encountered, they had but little. Rich wages in Galena. Fabulous crops from the new soil. The highest of markets at New Orleans.

If reminded that the forests must be cut and burned before crops could be raised they enthusiastically declared their eagerness to conquer the forests. Few dreamed that in a land of plenty some would face actual starvation and might be forced to live on the tender shoots and buds of the laurel, as more than one family had done in bridging over a gap in the larder.

The Pleasant Ohio was the land of promise, the land of luxurious comforts. Ignorant even of what they should take with them, many loaded up with iron and kettles, rich booty for pirates, useless to settlers till a smithy set up his anvil, until there was something to cook in the kettles.

* * *

AFTER Emery had finished his sad recital I asked—

"Has any white man come aboard and visited you during your trip down the river?"

"Not since we was passing a river called the Big Sandy. He was a nice, pleasant feller."

"Tell me about him. How did he look?"

"Big feller. Awfully good-natur'd. Blackest an' thickest whiskers I ever see. He told us to drop anchor an' wait till the river riz. We stayed three days waiting, then decided to come on an' let it overtake us."

"He didn't stay with you after giving that advice?"

"No. Had to go back to his little farm, he said. We's mighty sorry to lose him. Awfully good company. Brought a jug on board and we drunk it all up."

My inner eyes began to behold the sinister figure of Harpe. He had been back from visiting the boat but a short time when I arrived at his tavern. He had advised the immigrants to wait for the rise so that he might have time to arrange for the hold-up. To make sure I asked—

"Did he have any ways with his hands or tricks of speaking that you noticed?"

"Why, no. He did fumble his chin a lot. An' he had mighty pleasant way of saying, 'I see, I see.' Mighty pleasant the way he'd agree to everything you said.

" 'Of course,' he'd say, an' it sounded mortal perlite."

That settled it. Harpe had acted as his own spy. He had learned every detail of their plans as well as the nature of their possessions. When I said as much to Emery he seemed to be stunned.

"It don't stand to reason," he protested. "He sung funny songs, played the fiddle, cracked jokes an' give us good advice. Why, when it comes to acting suspicious you'd fit in better'n him. You come along an' talked with us an' found out our plans, then went ashore. You must 'a' been near where the pirates was hiding."

"I went ashore long enough to shoot an Indian who was trying to get my scalp," I said. "I was quite a bit up-stream, not near enough to hear any gun-firing. If you'll stick with me till we make Losantiville you'll learn fast enough I'm Ensign Maxwell Broad of the United States Army, detailed on special service."

"I ain't going for to be suspicious. I've got 'nough mis'ry without taking on that load," muttered Emery. "I'll go along with you. I ain't got no one else to go with."

A dubious compliment, but I was satisfied. After a while he reached for the paddle, saying that he was competent to relieve me. Under his strong strokes the dugout fairly flew.

When the sun was overhead I directed him to make shore so that we might cook what was left of the turkey. He was now fierce with hunger and would dare any peril for the sake of his stomach. Or as he put it—

"I'd chase grub into —— afore I'd starve any longer."

CHAPTER IV

THE ROAD TO HELL

WE ROUNDED a bend and made straight for the thickly wooded shore, where I saw a flatboat fastened against the bank and half-concealed by foliage.

"Greenhorns!" I exclaimed in disgust.

"Why so?" asked Emery, ceasing to paddle and wiping the sweat from his eyes. "Is every one on this danged river s'posed to know Injuns are in the bush an' bloody pirates afloat?"

"No river-man would tie up in that spot, where the full force of the current strikes against the bank. They'll be lucky to pass through the night without being buried under several hundred tons of rock and dirt. The current is working under the bank and it's sure to cave in."

Emery stared curiously, and murmured:

" 'Pears sort o' lifeless, don't it? Not even a hen clucking, let alone a hoss or cow making a noise."

My woods eyes began to scan the big flat more closely. All flatboats look alike to some people, just as all Indians do. Yet the half-view of this craft was reminiscent of another I had recently seen. Emery confirmed my growing suspicion by giving a low cry and moaning—

"Joel Camp's boat!"

There was no doubt about it, for now I recognized it although I had seen it but once. The pirates had disposed of the livestock and had transshipped the cargo to the second boat. Not caring to turn the empty flat adrift, perhaps to precede them down the river and advertise the tragedy, and not daring to attract Indians by firing it, they had tied it here below the bend, to be found and speculated upon or to be buried by caving banks.

Emery began to shiver, his nerves rebelling against a closer scrutiny of the ill-fated craft. I nosed the dugout against the stern and made it fast and climbed on to the three-foot shelf, or deck, and peered through the low door opening into the livestock's quarters. There was no life below deck.

I climbed on deck and found plenty of signs. One of the first things I noticed was an apron with brilliant red dots. Emery saw it at the same time and gave a choked cry.

I quieted him, and looked about for further signs. There were stains never made by the elements, and there were dents and gouges and holes where blows had fallen and bullets had plowed. A hand dyed in blood had left its imprint on the hatch that led down into the forward cabin. On observing it I called out to Emery—

"Did one of your party have two fingers, left hand, missing at the second joint?"

"Oh, Lord save us! No, no. Don't let me see 'em!"

"There's nothing to see, only the impression left by a hand. When you meet a man minus the two middle fingers of his left hand you'll be seeing one of the murderers."

"Then may the Lord have mercy on him if he's to git mercy, for I'll chop his head off."

This avowal seemed to drive the shivers from his soul, for he now moved about the deck with the quickness of a cat, his long arms extending the sword as if anxious to slash it against the assassins. In addition to being held by the two lines carried ashore the flat was plastered against the bank and half-buried under the bushes by the drive of the current, the recent rise giving the river new teeth.

I tried the hatch over the living-quarters but found it made fast. Returning to the stern, I dropped to the shelf and entered through the door. Emery swarmed down after me, and I heard his teeth chatter as we came into the silence of the place. Passing through the "barnyard" we came to a second door, which was ajar. Now we were in the cabin proper.

I readily reconstructed the tragedy. The pirates had massacred nearly all of the two families on deck before the latter could think to take the defensive. But some one or two had managed to drop through the hatch and shoot the bolt that held it fast. The few pieces of rude furniture were overturned. The cheap curtains hung over the "windows"—pathetic testimonials of a woman's instinct for home-making—were riddled and torn.

The pirates on discovering the survivors below had shot them through the windows, as was evidenced by the stains on the floor. Perhaps the besieged might have made more of a fight if they had not forgotten to bar the door in the stern. Through this the pirates had crept and gained entrance to the cabin.

Without any doubt the fighting—rather, the massacre—had taken place on this boat. The other, comparatively free from incriminating signs, had been used in removing the plunder.

The effect on Emery was almost overwhelming. He would hold his breath until his broad face turned purple. A forceful exhalation; then he would renew his wind and again come near to choking. This silent, empty cabin, these homely reminders of his murdered friends, were almost too much for him.

I talked to him, reminding him how the assassins must be run down and declaring them to be skulking cowards, who killed only when their victims were taken by surprize. As I cursed them out his bearing gradually changed. The horror of the crime was no longer reducing him to weakness. His manhood was reasserting itself, and if his breathing was labored yet steady fires burned in his eyes. Now his rage was fully aroused it would burn in his soul until he had met and measured out retribution to the guilty.

"Let's git out of here," he softly whispered. "Too much like a graveyard. Let's git started after 'em. We oughter travel fast enough to overhaul 'em. Once we catch up with 'em I'll send 'em to ——, or else go on an' join Joel Camp an' the others."

"We'll find them fast enough," I encouraged him. "But we must eat first. We must cook food to take along with us."

"I never want to taste food till I've overhauled 'em," he muttered. "Just give me a crack at 'em——"

My hand squeezed his arm to stop his mouth. I pointed through the window. The dugout I had so carefully made fast was floating from the boat. He turned to rush out and bring it back, but I gripped his arm and whispered in his ear:

"Devil's work! Some one's aboard and cut the rope. Quiet for your life while I bar the door."

There was no fear in the man now. His eyes glittered and his wide mouth twisted and snarled as he pictured himself working vengeance with the long sword.

I darted noiselessly through the "barnyard" to the door. In a second I had this barred and was back in the cabin, securing the second door behind me.

"What did they come back for?" he whispered.

"Indians, not pirates," I said.

He showed his disappointment. He was hoping that they were river-pirates. But no white scum could have gained the deck from the bush-littered bank and set the dugout adrift without my ears detecting some sound.

SHIFTING my rifle to my left hand, I drew my pistol and cautiously approached the window. Suddenly a face appeared at the opening, a face upside down, for the owner was swinging down from the deck to spy on the cabin. Emery made a choking sound in his throat at the unexpected apparition—a fine type of savage art, the mouth being hideously prolonged by streaks of vermilion, while white clay or paint had been used in making wide circles around the eyes.

It was all over in a couple of seconds, the appearance of the face and the one hand holding a short spear, and the discharge of my pistol. With a hiccough the savage fell headlong into the water, and —— broke out on deck.

"Noise can't hurt you," I cried to Emery, who was—as I later learned—hearing his first Indian war-whoop. "Watch that window. I'll guard the other. Thrust with your sword if anything shows, but keep your own head in."

"They make such an amazing racket," he complained as I reloaded my pistol.

Yet he showed no hesitancy in standing before the small opening, his long weapon held ready for a jab.

I had finished loading and was giving my attention to both window and the clamor on deck when a bow *twanged* and Emery gave a grunt and staggered backward. Sick at heart, I wheeled, only to find him staring stupidly at an arrow-shaft protruding apparently from his shoulder.

" 'Pears to 'a' gone plumb through," he slowly announced.

"Break off the head and draw the shaft out," I yelped. "It cleared the bone, or you'd be on your back."

"No blood on the point," he said as he snapped off the head and threw it on the floor. He stripped off his "warmus" (working garment of red flannel) and bared his mighty muscles. A red streak showed where the arrow had grazed the skin. He could thank a lack of aim and a hasty release for his escape.

Resuming his warmus, he started to thrust his head from the window, but I drew him back. The shouting overhead suddenly ceased. Emery looked relieved, but to me it was a bad omen. Having failed to paralyze us with fear by their ferocious yells, they were now planning up some deviltry which would require cunning to block.

"Guess them devils have scooted, eh?" remarked Emery.

I motioned him to be silent and stared at the planking overhead. I could not catch even the soft fall of a moccasin, but if my ears registered nothing my nose was a better guard. A sniff, and I was warning Emery—

"They've set fire to the boat."

"Hull's made of oak. It'll be slow burning. But what a danged lot of smoke!"

It was smoke, and I feared it worse than fire. Now we heard the crackling of burning brush on deck, and a sifting of smoke through the cabin door sent me to the "barnyard." The Indians had forced a bundle of burning stuff through the window and had tossed green boughs on it. I caught my breath, dragged the green boughs aside and threw them through the window, then stamped out the fire.

"This hull's ten inches thick. They can't burn us out," insisted Emery. "If we can keep the smoke out——"

"The window!" I fairly screamed as something appeared at the opening.

Before I could waste a bullet I saw it was a forked stick heaped high with burning brush. A savage was trying to force it into the cabin, intending to follow it with green stuff. Already the slashed curtains melted away in spidery flames.

Emery was nearer the window than I, and now he jumped forward and elevated the point of his sword, burying it in the heart of the flaming mass. With a heave of his shoulders he thrust it upward, and a guttural howl told us he had scored.

"Hit something," he called over his shoulder as the fire dropped into the water.

In another moment a heavy body plunged into the river. Emery stood staring, round of eye, at his hands.

"Leaked down along the blade," he complained in great disgust.

I darted back to the "barnyard" in time to knock another bunch of fire overboard with the butt of my rifle. The deck was alive with howls of rage.

Then some leading warrior began talking in Shawnee, calling for volunteers to swing down and fire their guns through the window. But another urged prudence, declaring that we were trapped and that the windows had cost two lives already. The last speaker advised ripping up the deck planks so we would be uncovered. Once an opening was made it would be easy to shoot us down.

The hatch began to move, and I hastened back to Emery's side and made sure that the thick bolt of oak was in place and would hold.

"If we can hold out till dark we might slip through a winder an' swim for it," whispered Emery.

I agreed that this was our one chance, and was suggesting how we could double it by one taking a window and the other the door in the stern, when the noise overhead abruptly ended.

* * *

"WHAT have my children caught?"

The new voice came like a thunderclap on my ears; a deep, sonorous voice, and one I had heard more than once, the last time being on the Great Miami at Fort Finney. The speaker was Bluejacket—Captain Bluejacket we called him in those days—or Weyapiersenwah, as the Shawnees named him.

He had never forgiven the white race for the murder of Cornstalk of the Shawnees. He was more to be feared than five hundred ordinary savages. Within a year he was to join with Little Turtle in defeating General Harmar, and within five years he was to achieve sole leadership of the red forces opposed to General Wayne. His appearance at any time contained the elements of tragedy.

I had met him at various times on the Indian Shore, when he came to announce that his young men would hunt in the vicinity of some post and would bring in their pelts to exchange for trade goods. Once he left his eighteen-year-old son with us as a hostage, and the boy ran back to his people after a few days of garrison life.

Had he not overruled Little Turtle in 1794 by insisting on war when the Turtle was wise enough to foresee the uselessness of further fighting I should at this late date put him down as the peer of the Turtle. In 1789, when history had not fully measured the two great leaders, I believed Bluejacket to be the greatest of the Shawnees.

And his calm voice over my head, speaking as if to children busy at their traps, took much of the fighting spirit out of me. To Emery Bluejacket was only another "Injun," and he leaned on his sword and stared at his bloody hands with a mixture of pride and loathing.

"Two white men are down there. Two of our warriors are in the river without having sung their death-songs," Bluejacket was informed.

"That is bad, and they must be covered," gravely said Bluejacket. "But let them be taken alive so that they shall die like brave men. For they must be brave to send two of our men on ahead of them. Tear up the timbers and drop down on them."

Now I had small liking to wait like a rat trapped in a corner until the enemy smothered me by sheer weight. It was so much better to go down fighting than to prove to Shawnee, Mingo, or Pottawatomi that one is not afraid of the fire.

It is a man's part to stand pain without murmur when pain is inevitable, but never a pioneer on the Beautiful River who would not consider it a great mercy to die fighting rather than to roast at the stake. Happiness is relative; and, faced with the torture, happy is the man who finds a knife-thrust or a kindly bullet.

Indians will die at the stake with a smile on their lips and a taunt on their tongues, but white men find small glory in such an ending. And at that, I've seen a Mingo stab himself twice after being wounded so as to escape torture. Emery knew nothing of such things. But having seen the Ohio Indians practise their cunning in shooting to shatter a man's hip-bone so that he would fall and yet live to be tormented to death, there remained no desire in my mind except to make a clean finish beneath smashing blows.

Emery tried to wave his sword, but there was no room for him to swing it. If assailed in the cabin we would make but a poor showing. Already the planking was beginning to groan and squeak as the savages worked the ends loose with their axes and inserted the butts of saplings as levers.

"They will tear up the deck and jump down on us," I whispered to Emery. "A poor chance for you to use your sword down here."

"Then let's git out where I can use it," he replied, moving toward the door.

As the boat was entirely decked over it was necessary for us to pass out through the door in the stern, or else suddenly to slip the bolt under the hatch and make our exit that way. The last was impossible to consider, for the moment a head appeared there would fall a benumbing blow. Whatever we would attempt must be done now as a plank gave way at one end.

I led the way through the "barnyard" to the door and softly removed the bars. Opening it a hair's breadth, I peered out and saw that the stern of the boat was clear of savages, although there were two up the bank armed with bows and arrows. These were there to prevent any escape by a dive into the river.

"We can jump in and take our chances on drowning," I whispered.

"They'd never let us alone. They'd either git us or make us drown."

"I think so."

"Then I'm ag'in' it. Let's give 'em a fight."

"Keep under cover until I've climbed on deck. Then come up. There's one chance in a million we may break through the bush and get into the thick timber."

He nodded to show he understood, and I stepped through the door and started to climb on deck. A savage on the bank howled a warning and scrambled down to seize me. I paid no attention to him, as I knew he would not use a weapon after being warned that we must be taken alive. The others were straining at a plank, and for a moment they seemed paralyzed at the audacity of my appearance.

"Come on, Emery!" I yelled, firing my pistol and breaking a warrior's arm.

The line released the plank so suddenly that it caught a pair of hands and held a warrior down with his fingers smashed. I was conscious of a death-yell at the stern and wondered if Emery hadn't caught the fellow coming from the bank to assail me.

"Brave men! Take them alive!" called out Bluejacket, who stood to one side and watched the affair with blazing eyes.

"Into the bushes, Emery," I howled as I lifted my rifle and pulled the trigger; but the flint had dropped out and Bluejacket's career was fated to continue.

BEFORE I could draw my ax a burly savage had me in his arms. As we clinched I noticed that he was wearing the apron with the big red dots. With a wrestler's trick I brought him to his knees and he grabbed for his knife.

The apron hampered him, and it was my hand that caught the handle while his found only the blade. I yanked it through his fingers, causing him to yell as he expected a mortal thrust, but Bluejacket leaped forward and twisted the weapon from my grasp and two warriors caught me by the arms.

I saw the second savage on the bank make a flying leap for the deck, waving his ax and shouting a warning. Next the tall blade of Emery's sword came into view, and there was red along the edge. Once more the group of savages seemed incapable of action as the short and powerful form of Emery gained the deck.

"Leap into the bush, man!" I frantically shouted; for I verily believed the good fellow could win clear, for a time at least, if he acted promptly.

If he heard me he paid no attention. Back went the shaggy head and up went the wet sword, the big hands firmly grasping the twelve inches of handle. I do not suppose any Ohio or Western Indian had even seen such an unusual weapon; and guttural cries and grunts sounded from all sides of me.

Emery resolutely stepped forward instead of jumping among the bushes. Bluejacket was the first to sense the danger and shouted for his men to act. The spell was broken and a dozen leaped forward, but not until the terrible weapon was completing its first circle. The braves wildly leaped backward, barely escaping the hissing edge.

"Are you cowards to be afraid of a big knife?" taunted Bluejacket, throwing aside his blanket and advancing.

With a whoop a brawny rascal sought to dive under Emery's guard. His head fairly leaped from his shoulders, pursued by a red geyser.

Bluejacket snarled and hurled his ax. It missed and plumped into the river. The others rushed my friend, leaping in and out as the blade menaced their heads.

Bluejacket caught up his blanket and with a flirt of the hand sent it fluttering down on the revolving blade. Then the pack piled in, but even with the steel muffled Emery nearly sheared a man's arm off at the shoulder.

Bluejacket snatched an ax from a warrior hand and brought the flat of it down on Emery's head, sending him senseless to the deck. I gave a wrench and nearly escaped my two captors, whereat they threw me on my face, and inside of a minute both I and my friend were lying side by side, bound with cords.

The man with the injured arm was bleeding to death despite the efforts of his companions to stanch the flow of blood. He began his death-song and sang it bravely until it dwindled away as his spirit passed. The decapitated Indian was taken ashore as well as the one killed by Emery when he came through the door at my heels.

Five warriors the Shawnees had lost, and I was responsible for one. Surely if ever a New England man counted coup it was Emery on that day.

Bluejacket resumed his blanket, then picked up the long sword and stood it on its point beside him, staring with awe at the long handle and its heavy iron guard, and the great length of the thick steel.

"What is this? A medicine knife?" he asked of Emery in Shawnee.

"It is the white man's medicine knife, Weyapiersenwah," I spoke up.

"You speak the Shawnee tongue. Who are you?" curiously asked Bluejacket, bending forward to look into my face.

"Ensign Broad, of Fort Harmar on the Muskingum. You send tobacco in for us to smoke while your young men are stealing horses and scalping on both sides of the Ohio."

"You talk like a child. Why should not the Shawnees send tobacco and white belts, take your rum and do dances for your head warriors, and then kill when they can? We tried the other way when the great Cornstalk went to live with the white men. You know what happened to him."

"He was murdered by bad white men," I readily admitted. "The Thirteen Fires had nothing to do with that. They were bad white men, just as there are bad Indians."

"My white brother speaks with a wise tongue," was the ironical reply. "It's a gun that shoots at both ends. Those Indians who scalp and take horses are bad Indians. The Shawnees have nothing to do with their bad work."

I had let myself in for it and had no logical reply ready. Emery saved me some embarrassment by twisting his head and hoarsely demanding—

"What next?"

"They'll take us to some village or camp, then we will see," I guardedly answered, fearing lest he might go to pieces if told the truth.

We were yanked to our feet and thongs were placed around our necks. Then with our hands tied behind our backs and each having a warrior pulling him along by the neck-cord, we floundered through the bushes the best we could.

On entering the thick timber we found less ground-clutter, yet the traveling continued to be arduous. In place of bushes and vines there were slippery roots, moss-covered rocks, and miry spots; for ancient woods are always wet.

In our helpless condition we were bound to stumble and fall. When we went down we were half-choked as the man holding the leading-string impatiently jerked it to make us rise. Of course we were powerless to shield our faces when we took a tumble.

When we made an unusually ludicrous spectacle in falling we were jeered at. Once Emery all but lost his balance and after recovering it by wonderful agility a warrior tripped him and he fell on his face.

Recovering his feet and clearing his mouth of mud, he swore a round New England oath and promised—

"I'll cut your head off for that, my fine feller."

The offender asked me what the short man had said. I replied he was making medicine to get a Shawnee head. The warrior fell back to the rear, toying with his ax and scowling like a fiend. He did not bother my friend again, however.

* * *

CONDITIONS in Indian warfare had changed during the ten years I had put in on the Ohio frontier. No longer did small armies of Indians swarm across the river at Three Islands and the mouth of the Scioto to lay siege to Kentucky forts and Virginia settlements. Instead small bands made the raids on the Kentucky shore, while the influx of whites to the Ohio and Illinois country afforded the savages opportunities for looting and killing nearer home.

Grown wise by experience, the settlers were usually well "forted." It was difficult for the raiders to repeat their early successes, such as the killing or capturing of fifteen members of the Schoolcraft family within a few years with never one of the captured ever returning; or such as the killing of the four Washburn brothers.

Thinking men among the Indians were fully aware of the fate confronting the race. A man like Bluejacket would passionately fight to a finish. Little Turtle would seek to prolong his people's enjoyment of the land by compromises.

And while the treaties were being argued, and after they were signed, small bands would be out, but always finding it more difficult to carry their prisoners north. With an abundance of captives in the early days the ax was used on the weak and wounded. Some prisoners were adopted; but there was never a lack of candidates for the stake.

Emery's extraordinary physique, topped off by the huge sword, first excited the savages' curiosity, then their admiration. It was ironical to find him elevated far above me in their regard; he the greenhorn, and I a trained woodsman and Indian-fighter. He knew nothing about the red men, and yet they were beginning to accept him as a big medicine. I, a veteran of ten years' fighting against the rascals, was merely a prisoner.

They no longer laughed at him when he fell; and I even fancied his captor was endeavoring to pick easy footing for him. Not so considerate was my man, who selected rocks and roots and especially the mud and mire. Bluejacket fell in by my side, and my leader ceased tormenting me for a bit. The chief asked—

"Who is this buffalo of a man?"

"A white man from the stinking water under the rising sun."

"Do all men by the stinking water carry such big knives?"

"Only the magicians and medicine men. The Great White Father of the Thirteen Fires carries one as tall as three of your tallest warriors."

Bluejacket pondered over this statement for several minutes. Then he said—

"They say the Delawares fired seventy charges of powder into Colonel Crawford's body when they burned him on Sandusky Creek seven years ago."

"Simon Girty, the white rattlesnake, was there and laughed at Crawford when Crawford begged him to shoot him. He told you. He ought to know."

"Girty could not save him. He had no power with the Delawares. A little bird tells me he would never ask the Shawnees to spare you."

"I would never beg my life of the skunk," I declared.

This was not braggadocio, for I well knew Girty would enjoy seeing me roast. I would gain nothing by talking softly.

Girty was a snake, and yet I ever held that his brother Jim was the worst beast of the three Girty brothers. A strange trio and victims of a strange fate, in that each as a boy was held a captive by Indians; Jim by the Shawnees, George by the Delawares, and Simon by the Senecas. And each acquired a horrible craving for blood from his captivity.

Bluejacket smiled grimly and complimented me by prophesying:

"You will die a very brave death. It is

a long time since the Shawnees had so bold a man."

"What about my friend?"

Bluejacket stared after the square, muscular form of Emery in silence for a minute, then replied—

"They say the Shawnees will not paint him black, but will give him new clothes."

This at least was a consolation as there would always remain the chance of the Salem man's being ransomed if adopted. By the treaty signed at Fort Finney three years before, the nation was to bring in all its white captives. From the beginning the savages were very loath to do this; and I always believed that they fetched in only those who, they knew, would run back to them at the first opportunity.

Anyway, I know we had the devil's own time in keeping returned captives at the fort until we could send them to the Falls or up the river to Wheeling or Pittsburg. I speak of Emery being ransomed as I never dreamed the awkward fellow could make his escape.

Bluejacket ordered my leader to halt; then he proceeded to rearrange the noose around my neck so that it would cease choking me. His hands were gentle and light as a woman's, his whole manner being compassionate, almost soothing.

But this misled me not at all. I was elected to the torture, and he desired me to be in good condition so that I would take more time in dying.

As we resumed our march he gazed much at the long sword one of his men was carefully carrying. Already the huge blade was being accepted by the savage mind as a mighty medicine.

Suddenly the chief exclaimed:

"Now I have it! Once there was a race of very tall men, so tall that they reached nearly to the clouds. They lived along the Ohio and in Kentucky. They lived in the old times, before the Indians came. At Big Bone Lick I have seen the big bones of the animals they hunted and fought with.

"The big knife belonged to them. This white buffalo is one of their children. His fathers were tall as trees. He is wide as a creek."

Thus did he explain the sword to himself. In Indian logic there is no delay in reasoning back from effect to cause. A giant sword bespeaks a giant race of men. The amazingly big bones found at the various licks were immediately associated with the vanished giants. Rather, they proved the giants. It was very simple and entirely satisfactory.

It was good to have him believe such nonsense, as it increased his respect for Emery and promoted the latter's chances of escaping a hideous death. Bluejacket remained by my side for the rest of the march, never leaving me until we halted on the banks of a sluggish creek at nightfall.

Fires were built, scouts thrown out and hunters sent for meat. Emery and I were allowed to sit facing each other, our feet being tied together. His broad face was furrowed with perplexity. To ease his mind I informed him—

"They'll not paint you black."

"They'd better not, the filthy vermin!" he roared.

He had no idea what the painting of a prisoner black signified.

WE WERE given all the meat we wanted, and as the Shawnees were famous salt-makers we did not eat it unseasoned. That night we were pegged out in spread-eagle style, with lines running from our arms and legs to warriors on each side. A movement in the night resulted in instant wakefulness on the part of our guards. If repeated we received blows. I tried to work a hand loose, and thought I was succeeding when the flat side of an ax smashed down on my nose and brought blood.

In the morning the scouts came in. One of them had a scalp and some surveying-instruments. The surveyors, I knew, were laying out ranges along the river and were not supposed to be so far inland. Some one of the party had strayed aside. When histories of conquered wildernesses are written I hope that the surveyors and their perilous tasks will not be forgotten.

After the scalp was displayed the preparations for the march were hurriedly completed—hastened no doubt by fear that the surveyors' escort of soldiers might find our camp. We swung off toward the northwest, making toward the Little Miami, and I knew we were bound for some village above the site of old Chillicothe, where Colonel Boone was held a prisoner in '78 and which was destroyed by Clark in '80.

Nothing except the hardships of forced

travel occupied our attention until midday, when the band halted to eat. Neither Emery nor I was trussed up this time, but with our hands tied at our backs we were allowed to wander about the camp. There was small chance for us to escape with our hands bound, but in addition to that precaution two or more warriors were ever at our heels.

The fire was built at the mouth of a dark and gloomy ravine, and the dismal appearance of the place was enough to dampen the spirits of even a free man. Emery seemed fascinated by the rock-choked defile and went to explore it for a few rods. I followed him, and the warriors kept abreast and behind us. Suddenly my friend halted and huskily cried out:

"Bless my soul! God help us!"

I gained his side and he nodded toward a big beech. In the bark was cut:

THIS IS THE ROAD TO HELL. 1782.

We stared at the forlorn record in silence for half a minute; then Emery uneasily asked—

"What does it mean?"

"Some prisoner passing this way carved it there seven years ago."

"I wonder if he found it hell," he muttered, turning back to the fire.

CHAPTER V

THE GRENADIER SQUAW

THROUGH the ravine we marched and ten miles beyond before we halted. The way was rough, especially in the ravine, for many rocks cluttered the trail, and many a rough tumble Emery and I took.

We were treated kindly on the way, however. Once when a warrior would have strapped packs to our backs Bluejacket sternly forbade it. At frequent intervals we were given water.

It was early October with the nights cold and threatening a frost which would strip the hardwood trees of their gay colors. Yet during the day the air lay hot and heavy in the woods and I suffered more from heat than ordinarily I would in mid-Summer.

Emery was downcast. I now understood him to be of a peculiar temperament. I do not believe any show of physical danger would intimidate him; but his was a mind given much to brooding and mournful musing. Perhaps the atmosphere of his native Salem—where, I'm told, they killed witches—still clung to him. Whatever the cause, I know that he was extremely downhearted after he had read the words cut in the beech-tree.

Our second camp was in a small opening where the sun was warm and welcome although I steamed from the journey.

It needed only a glance to reveal the fact that we had arrived at a new camp and one intended to be permanent. For women and children were there, and they came trooping forward to stare at us, while some old hags were for shooting blank charges into our legs and backs. One withered creature with gray hair thrust her talons into my face and asked—

"Did you ever eat fire?"

I did not translate the query to Emery; and Bluejacket soon put a stop to the annoyance.

After we had rested and had eaten, our hands were tied behind our backs and we were led to the middle of the clearing and told to sit down. The warriors began assembling in a half-circle before us. Back of us were grouped the women and children.

The fighting men numbered twice as many as our original captors. Undoubtedly runners had been sent ahead to spread the word, and men had flocked from neighboring camps to see the white men die.

For a time we sat there, Emery impatient for action while I was perfectly contented for the braves to take their time. From the low-voiced conversation of two warriors acting as our immediate guards I gathered that a large band was absent on a raid. Bluejacket was waiting for this band to return before commencing the ceremonies.

Finally he rose and addressed the gathering, briefly explaining that we had been captured on a flatboat. While the Shawnees were ostensibly at peace with the whites he insisted that it was an enforced peace and one that deprived the Shawnees of the lands given them by their uncles, the Wyandots. With much eloquence he played upon the emotions of his audience and declared that soon black belts would be sent and that many nations would accept the same and "send in their sticks." He added that the Wyandots would continue to act as guardians of the hatchet for the Hurons as they had done during the late war.

This was prime news to forward to St. Clair could I escape; for black belts were invitations for other tribes to unite in war, and the sending in of sticks referred to their way of announcing their contributions in fighting men. That the chief should talk thus openly before me and permit me to be, as I always have believed, the first white man outside of the renegades to learn of his and Little Turtle's plan to wage a general war in 1790, and henceforth until his disastrous defeat by General Wayne, convinced me I was looked on as being as good as dead.

With his historical review out of the way he stated that it had been a long time since the Shawnees were in a position to sacrifice a white man of merit to appease the uneasy ghost of the great Cornstalk. He rejoiced that now he possessed two prisoners, either of whom was worthy to die and cover the dead chief's bones.

A rumbling chorus of approval from the men and a cackle of delight from the women greeted this announcement. Frowning at the interruption, the chief explained that one of the prisoners was undoubtedly a descendant of the lost giants who had lived south of the Ohio in the days of the big medicine animals. While not tall like his ancient fathers this prisoner carried his father's knife and was able to use it as easily as a Shawnee would swing a war ax.

Such a man was too valuable to be burned. Bluejacket proposed to adopt him for his son, to take him to the Little Miami and wash the white blood from his veins and use him in fighting the white men. No white soldier had ever carried such a big knife. This announcement was not received with any enthusiasm, and he fiercely demanded:

"Who shall say that the giants will not return to help us drive the whites from our lands, and that this buffalo of a man is the first to come? Surely they will not come to aid us if this, their son, is put to death."

While they were pondering over this he completely removed their dissatisfaction by explaining what a brave man I was, and what a brave death I would die. Bluejacket was cunning. Although their acknowledged leader in war, he did not propose to take over any authority in disposing of the prisoners, except as he would insist on adopting Emery. My fate he would leave for the assemblage to decide in the customary manner; and I knew that I had already received my sentence.

After he had finished and the warriors had remained motionless for a few minutes an old man rose and called for his drum. Two young men eagerly brought forward a keg with flaps of rawhide stretched over the ends. The old man squatted beside this and belabored it with a club, making a doleful booming noise.

After he had done this for a few minutes a grave and aged warrior stood up and voiced the thanks of the Shawnees to their great leader for what he had done for the nation. He wished to pass on my case at once, and asked if this be the will of the people. A loud shout testified to their impatience to behold me burning. Without further ceremony a man was named to notch the stick, while another brought a war-club and blackened the knob by thrusting it into the charcoal of a dead fire.

I knew what was coming, but Emery—bless his simple soul!—was as ignorant as a child. The man with the stick recorded his own vote first by hurling the stick to the ground and then cutting a notch.

The war club was then passed to another, who threw it down with a dramatic gesture and turned and glared at me. Then, picking it up, he passed it to his neighbor, who threw it down and passed it on. And each time a man voted for my death by throwing the club the official custodian of the vote cut a notch in his stick.

The club traveled nearly the length of the half-circle before a man passed it on without voting for my death. That was the only notch cut on the "life" side of the stick.

The grim business being finished, two warriors came to me and took me by the arms and gently urged me to my feet and began leading me to one side. Some of the warriors made it their way to pass close to me to see how I was enduring it, and they approved with nods as my outward appearance continued to be calm.

Among these was the man who had voted for me to live. He, unlike the others, did not meet my gaze; but I recognized him despite his paint. Two years before I had pulled him from the Ohio, where he was floating with both arms broken and keeping up by holding to his horse's mane with his teeth.

Emery called after me and asked what

the matter was. I answered for him to remain quiet as no harm would come to him. My escort led me into the bushes, stripped me to the buff and smeared me black with charcoal.

When they led me back into the opening again Emery did not know me; for which I was glad, although I knew the scene he was about to witness would turn him into a wild man. However, I did not reveal myself to him, hoping he would be removed before the terrible work began. But Bluejacket believed that his prospective son should harden himself to such scenes, and refused to order him away.

A dwarf oak was selected for the post and was cleared of its lower branches. My hands were then tied behind me, and a length of green rawhide was fastened around my waist and to the tree-trunk some fifteen feet from the ground. This afforded me room to sit down, or to walk twice around the post before "unwinding" myself.

I could see that Emery watched the proceedings in deep bewilderment. Only my readiness to obey each command and the Indians' gentleness in completing their preparations fooled him for a time. When they began arranging the brush his horrified voice boomed:

"Good God! Going to burn him!"

And he would have gained his feet and made to join me if several warriors had not leaped upon him. For a minute there was a rare swirl of legs and arms, the Salem man using his big head as a battering-ram and bringing a gush of blood with every smash. If it had not been for Bluejacket's interference one of his irate assailants, whose lips were smashed to a pulp, would have brained him with an ax.

Before they could reduce him, however, it was necessary to peg him out between four trees. Then he bellowed and cursed them in a terrible manner; and from that moment my esteem for the forceful qualities of New England people increased twofold. And I had heard our river-men at their best, or worst.

Meanwhile my own affairs were going from bad to worse. The fuel was in place; the warriors were grouped about me; the young bucks were stripping to the clout and painting themselves for the scalp-dance. The children were breaking bounds and trying to get at me, while the squaws loaded guns with blank charges to shoot into my bare flesh, or made scoops of bark with which to gather up coals and throw upon me.

The moment the fire got under way a woman dodged by a guard, and, snatching up a handful of blazing brush, threw it at me. Had she waited until coals were formed she would have served me evilly; but the brush scattered as she hurled it and I received no hurt beyond a few trifling burns.

IT WAS immediately following this onslaught that a tall figure came hurrying from the woods, while behind it came the man I had saved from drowning. And never had human form looked so fair and gracious as did that of this newcomer.

She was Non-hĕl-e-ma, sister of the famous Cornstalk, known to the English as "the Grenadier Squaw." She would have been of excellent height even for a warrior, standing better than six feet. For a woman she was enormous. She had been baptized Catherine, and was commonly called "Katy" by the soldiers at the fort.

More than once she had warned the whites against coming attacks; and even the death of her brother could not turn her against us. His death had resulted from the terrible passions of those who had looked on Robert Gilmore's mutilated body and bloody head after it was brought across the Kanawha.

Governor Patrick Henry declared that the murderers of Cornstalk were Tories who plotted to keep the backwoodsmen at home fighting the Shawnees, instead of going to join the American army. But I never put any stock in that notion, as it certainly was Indians who killed Gilmore and thereby caused the death of the chief. The Grenadier Squaw knew that none deplored her brother's death more than did those having charge of him.

Knowing her history and knowing her personally, she appeared to me like a militant angel. My first thought was to cry out to her, but her rapid strides as well as the furtive figure of the friendly Indian told me that she was there in my behalf. I bit my tongue and kept silent as I could help my case not at all by displaying weakness.

On she came, a giantess, and the warriors gave ground. It was fit and proper that the sister of the great chief should have a choice of positions when a white man was being put to death. At the edge of the burning brush she halted and kicked the fagots aside and loudly called out:

"Ho, men of the Shawnee, this is the Moon of the Falling Leaf, and the leaves are still on the trees. It is too early for such fires. Do you grow old and find your blood turned to water that you must warm yourselves?"

Bluejacket ran up to her, crying:

"Woman, stand back with the other women. This man dies."

"All men die," her deep voice boomed. "Tell me something that is not as old as the sun."

"This man dies because your brother died."

"My brother died because Shawnees killed a white man beyond the Kanawha. My brother was killed by his own people as much as he was by the whites. If his ghost asks a death—burn a red man."

"You have a white heart. You love white people," hissed Bluejacket.

"Weyapiersenwah talks like a foolish bird," scoffed the Grenadier Squaw; and she proceeded to kick the remainder of the fuel away from the post.

"You lost your brother because of white men," passionately continued the chief.

"Then Non-hel-e-ma will take a brother from the white men. I will have this man as my brother."

"Your place is with the women. Stand away!" thundered Bluejacket.

"Am I still tied to the cradle-board that I do not know my rights?" was the jeering answer. "My family grows weak through death. It must be made strong again. I have lost a brother; I must find another brother."

Bluejacket bit his lips but remained silent. There was no denying the soundness of her position.

In every Indian nation, especially where the clan system exists, the perpetual warfare between birth and death are personified. It was the instinct of self-preservation that impelled the greater number of adoptions among the red people.

The birth of every child increased by so much the magic power—*orenda*, the Iroquois called it—of a family and the clan. Each death weakened the magic power of the family and clan.

To maintain an even balance, let alone increasing this magic power, the dead must be replaced; and the Grenadier Squaw was within her rights in demanding that I be released to take the place of her dead brother. The demand appealed to the fundamental beliefs of the Indian; for by washing out my white blood I could be made a Shawnee as thoroughly as if I had been born one.

"You can find other men to burn, Weyapiersenwah. This is a brave man. He shall be my brother to make good the strength lost by a brother's death," she calmly continued. "Burn that man over there."

And to my horror she pointed to Emery. Bluejacket scowled evilly and informed her—

"He is to be my son."

"Ho, ho!" she cried scornfully. "Weyapiersenwah is wise enough to build up his own strength by taking a son. Why does he look so black when the sister of Cornstalk would add to her spirit strength by replacing the lost brother?"

No matter how much the Shawnees might yearn to see a captive roasted there was no getting behind this appeal to their superstitious beliefs. The very existence of family and clan depended upon keeping the ranks full.

The civilized State adopts by wholesale and calls it "immigration." The need is the same in the two races even though the red man clothed his necessity in a haze of mysticism.

Yet Bluejacket was not quite done; for he demanded:

"What if the men of the Shawnee refuse Non-hel-e-ma? She should have taken this man before the black war-club voted for his death."

Instantly she shot back:

"Then will Weyapiersenwah be refused the victory when he fights the big fight he is even now planning. The sticks sent to him by the northern nations will tell lies and count ten warriors where only two will come. Black belts will be turned back by other nations. His magic power will grow weak and die when he refuses to make the Shawnee strong by washing white blood into red.

"But the warriors shall decide. They have voted once; now they shall vote again."

With that she picked up a club and blackened the end, and was dramatically shrewd in handing it to Bluejacket; then picked up a stick and produced a knife and stood ready to register his vote. Not expecting to have the climax shouldered upon him in this fashion, Bluejacket hesitated, glaring first at the club, then at me.

Once I believed he was about to throw it down; and the Grenadier Squaw made ready so to record him. But he was an Indian. Astute warrior and brave man, his superstitions were ingrained in his very soul. He knew that his own purpose in adopting Emery was to strengthen his family and clan. He implicitly believed that his magic power would increase because of the proposed adoption.

Death was brought about by a hostile agency. One fought it back by the birth-rate and adopted sons and daughters. With the welfare of the nation closest to his heart, how could he expect strength and success if he were guilty of refusing the Grenadier Squaw a right based on their deepest religious convictions?

I appreciated the struggle going on in his mind. I was covered with sweat when he raised the club, but instead of throwing it on the ground he sullenly passed it on. Every vote was on the "life" side this time.

WITHOUT a word the Grenadier Squaw pulled a knife and cut my thongs. She stalked away with a gesture for me to follow her, and a low command to the friendly Indian.

As I made for the woods I feared that rage would incite one of the disappointed warriors to send an ax into the back of my head, although reason assured me that nothing of the sort would happen. Deeply chagrined as they were, not a hand was raised against me. Bluejacket was a remarkable man, race aside; but he was an Indian. His followers could not be more free than he from slavish superstitions.

In the old days—and not so many years back at that—it is very probable that some if not the majority of the Shawnees would have decided that their *orenda* could afford to pass by the chance of strengthening itself in my particular case. Even then the basic truth, according to their primitive process of reasoning from effect back to cause, would remain unchallenged. For with many prisoners it always was easy to replace the dead without robbing the stake of its victims.

Emery from his prostrate position saw me pass and wildly called out:

"Be you Injun or white? Can you be Broad?"

"The same. Sit tight and don't fret. Everything is all right," I answered.

The Grenadier Squaw disappeared into the woods. The Indian who owed me a life caught up with me, bringing my garments and weapons. I halted long enough to dress; for with life restored I suddenly discovered that I was embarrassed.

Deep in the woods I found the Squaw, her strong face overcast with trouble.

"White man," she abruptly began, "will you be my brother and have the white blood washed out of you?"

"I shall always remember the debt I owe to Non-hel-e-ma," I replied.

This evasion exasperated her; and with none of the Indian fashion of beating about the bush she bluntly demanded—

"Do you mean you will return to your people even after going through the sacred ceremony of washing the white out of your blood?"

If she hadn't saved my life I would have lied to her most willingly; for patches of my body smarted from my brief experience at the stake. One has no scruples in seeking escape from the fire. A second visit is unthinkable. So I said:

"I want to go back to my people. They are your people, too. They baptized you. Color of the skin is nothing. It is the spirit inside us that counts."

She nodded her head slowly and stared at me with gloomy eyes. Then, lifting her head, she solemnly said:

"I am red. These are my people. Our day is ended. Bluejacket will fight, but it will be easier for him to stop the leaves from falling, to stop the snow from falling, to stop the winds from blowing, than to stop the coming of the whites. The trail opens before us and we must take it.

"A shorter trail was opened to us when we suffered in the South, and with our Grandfathers (Delawares) we came here on the Ohio to live with our Uncles (Wyandots). But this new trail will be our last and will lead behind the sleeping sun.

"When I tell my people to sit still and plant their corn they laugh at me and go out to fight. The more whites they kill the more they must kill. To kill white men is like sowing seed. A hundred for one spring up. Cornstalk's sister will take you as her brother to save your life."

"Let me try for the settlements without going through the ceremony," I urged.

Now that I stood outside the shadow I found the mockery of adoption very repellent. And this because to the Shawnees the ceremony was a sacred thing. While not thin-skinned I never could bring myself to meddle with another man's religion. Something of the Indian's superstitions—or faith—had touched me in ten years of contact, and while I did not believe their nonsense still there was no gain in defying their medicine.

She pondered the request with her sad eyes fixed on mine. Then with some leaves she rubbed much of the charcoal from my face, handling me much as if I were a dirty child needing attention. Then she said:

"Whether you run now or after being named my brother, you will be chased by death. If you are captured again nothing can save you from the fire. If you are washed red you will be safe so long as you live with my people."

"It isn't my escape I'm thinking of," I protested. "It would be easier for me to make the river after I am adopted. I am thinking of you. I will not go through the ceremony and then have your people say I played a trick on you."

Her small eyes flickered, and the strong mouth was less grim. I knew she was pleased at my thought for her.

"Go now," she quietly said.

"There is my friend, the man Bluejacket would adopt," I reminded her. "I would take him with me."

"He must carry his own pack," she curtly retorted.

"But you will give him a talk from me?"

She did not like the notion, having no desire to have anything to do with Emery. In her mind he typed the Indian's destruction, because he was so obviously a newcomer, a stranger to the land and yet one of the greedy claimants.

Men of my stamp, half-wild in habits, would live and die hunters. Emery's kind would burn forests, build too many cabins and frighten away all the game.

My people moved deeper into the wilds when a neighbor's smoke on the horizon made us think the country was being overrun. Emery's people would urge old friends to come and build their cabins with them.

My people gave plantations to the new republic. The Salem man's kin gave cities.

The Squaw's readiness to aid the whites—and God witnessed many a wild flight through the forests to carry the word that saved—could not whole-heartedly include a desire to benefit the New Englander. Still I was a "fort" man, and we had met several times. Reluctantly she agreed—

"Give me the talk."

I found a smooth piece of bark; and, taking a bullet from my belt-pouch, I managed to scrawl:

> Keep quiet and look for me tonight. Death if we are caught. But neither of us will become Indians.—M. Broad.

The Squaw took it, and, after warning me to remain where I was, departed for the camp. I spent my time in trying to rub the rest of the soot from my face and in examining several plans for getting Emery back to the river. Each was faulty because of the man's ignorance of woodcraft. It would have been easier for me to lead a horse back to the Ohio than to get the Salem man there.

For more than an hour I tried out scheme after scheme, and always came up against the same wall—pursuit and my inability to hide our trail. In huge disgust I decided that our escape depended on luck, and refused to form further plans.

The reaction from my great peril had left me a bit weak, and I grew sleepy. If we were to escape that night I would need all the strength I could store up; and, stretching myself out on the damp forest floor, I quickly fell asleep. It was the Grenadier Squaw prodding me with the toe of her moccasin that awoke me.

"The trail south is open if you lose no time," she informed me.

I jumped to my feet and stared about for a glimpse of Emery. She continued:

"Buckongahelas, of the Delawares, comes with twenty of his leading men to talk with Weyapiersenwah. The Shawnees move their camp north, for they do not want him to see the stake and the white captives."

"What is to be done with my friend?"

"You are left for me to answer for. I tell you the trail is open. There are two warriors watching the other man."

◆

THIS was excellent news. That great bugabear—Pursuit—was eliminated by the coming of Buckongahelas, Breaker-in-pieces, the head warrior of all the Delawares on the Miami and White Rivers.

Although he was against us in the war recently ended he never displayed any pleasure in shedding blood. Noncombatants were treated justly by him. Captives were most fortunate who could come within the zone of his influence. White men could pattern after him and find many excellent qualities to cultivate.

The first time I saw him was in the Winter of '86, when he came to visit General Clark at Fort Finney. I shall always remember their peculiar manner of greeting; for they gripped their right arms nearly to the shoulders and under them thus outstretched they joined their left hands. I could easily understand why the Shawnees should not wish to be caught by this great man with white prisoners in their possession and with a torture-stake marking the middle of their camp.

Now I was unguarded, and only two or three men were left to keep an eye on Emery. This was the good luck I had been praying for. If we could win clear of the camp we would stand small danger of being pursued. Two braves would have no heart for following my rifle. Our chief concern would be to watch out for small parties returning north from the Ohio.

The woods were now soaked with shadows and as I gained the edge of the opening the sun was half-way down behind the western forest crown. The warriors with their women and children had disappeared. Emery was no longer pegged out, but sat on a log with his sword stuck in the ground by his side. Two men were busy at a small fire cooking meat, their backs being toward me.

I waited until Emery's gaze wandered in my direction, then showed myself and waved my hand for him to join me. Picking up his sword, he began aimlessly wandering about the opening, hewing off the heads of frost-flowers as if he were fighting giants. The Indians watched him with awe, believing that he was making medicine or conversing with his spirit protectors. It was a most agreeable surprize to find that the fellow possessed wit enough to refrain from making direct for my hiding-place.

He had nearly completed a circuit of the opening when he drew abreast of my position. By that time his guards were busy with their cooking. With a careless glance behind him he stepped into the bushes.

"What the ——!" he grunted, springing back and trying to raise his sword.

"Shut your trap!" I hissed. "Are you crazy?"

"Oh, Lord! Broad, eh? Thought you was a Injun."

And I knew I'd made a poor job with the soot on my face.

"What the —— comes next?" growled Emery.

I turned to speak to the Grenadier Squaw, but she had vanished. She knew I was about to try for the river, taking Emery with me, and she did not wish to witness the beginning of the flight.

"The Ohio comes next if we have any luck," I informed him. "Throw that —— sword away and follow me as silently as you can."

He stoutly refused to part with the ungainly weapon. Warning him that the woods would be dark and that we must make as much distance as possible before sleeping, also that the two warriors would grow suspicious within ten minutes and start to find him, I led the way due south. I planned to keep clear of the Miami at least until near its mouth. I made no effort to hide our trail.

"Is there much danger?" asked Emery as he slipped and stumbled along at my heels, leaving a trace a cow could follow.

I explained that the danger was ahead rather than behind us. They had delayed burning me in hopes the band out on a raid would come in. It had not yet returned.

"War parties coming up from the Ohio usually follow the Miami," I added. "There is one band out that may cross our path any minute."

He growled like a bear with a sore head and mumbled—

"I'll cut some one's head off if they don't quit pestering me."

CHAPTER VI

THE HIDDEN CABIN

WE SLEPT cold that night and awoke dismally hungry. Emery was all for firing the rifle at game, the clamor in his stomach killing his prudence. I made him be patient until we scared up some turkeys and managed to knock over two with pieces of deadwood. Had the Salem man had his way we would have destroyed the entire flock. Finding a deep hollow surrounded by a thick growth, I risked enough fire partly to cook some of the meat, and then made my companion resume the journey.

Once I held him on the ground while a band of Indians passed us in single file. There were twenty-four and none of them carried scalps, and none was painted for war. I took it that they were returning from some river fort, where they had been proclaiming their firm grasp on the "chain of friendship," coupled with demands for rum to make their hearts warm.

But I will say this for the Shawnees: They would not drink our rum, whether while discussing peace treaties or selling pelts, until the main business was out of the way. And there were times when the absurd stories that we had poisoned the whisky and infected blankets with smallpox kept them from trade and drink altogether.

This particular band had no scouts out and was hurrying along without the usual careful attention for signs. The last I saw of them they were moving parallel to our trail, and if they struck into it later they did not turn back to follow it. Perhaps because it was so open and easily read they assumed we were some of their white renegades.

We traveled till late afternoon and struck some low hills heavily timbered. Now we slowed up our pace and searched for water.

This quest brought us a strange find. It was only a deep blaze on a black oak, but so freshly made that the sap still oozed from it. Emery attached no importance to it, although he must have realized that the tree did not grow the blaze and that human agency had made it.

I might have pressed on south, leaving it an unsolved mystery, had I not sighted a second blaze a few rods distant. The two were in line with the narrow valley. No Indian would thus mark a trail; and, curious to learn what white man would thus advertise his presence in the Indian country, I advanced beyond the second blaze and speedily raised a third. Now I knew that we were on a definite trail, and after an hour of fast traveling through the valley we came out to a natural opening and I was amazed to behold a trim log cabin.

Cabins meant white folks, and we advanced toward it boldly, when a gun-barrel shot through a loop-hole and a harsh voice commanded us to stand where we were.

"But we're white men. Just escaped from the Indians," I protested.

" 'Scaped from th' Injuns!" fiercely bellowed the fellow. "Ye —— scum! Mean to say ye've brought th' red murderers down on us? If I believed that, I'd shoot ye where ye stand, then drag yer bodies to the mouth o' the valley an' strip yer ha'r off an' leave ye."

"You bloodthirsty devil!" roared Emery, waving the long sword. "Come out here and I'll cut you in two."

The fellow was silent for a moment, then cried—

"Where'n —— did ye git that weepon?"

Pushing Emery aside, I asked—

"Do we get shelter for the night, or not?"

The gun-barrel was slowly withdrawn from the loop-hole and I caught the murmur of other voices. Then the door swung open and although no one appeared in view we took it as an invitation to enter.

As we passed from the dying sunlight into the cool, half-darkened cabin I heard a slight exclamation; and, turning and blinking, I made out the surprized face of Nancy Summers. Shifting my gaze to the man barring the door, I recognized her father.

"The man Broad!" she muttered. "We meet quite often."

With an oath Hoss Summers turned back from the door, staring at me blankly. Then he said:

"If it hadn't been for that black on yer face I'd 'a' known ye an' thought twice afore letting ye come in here. What d'ye mean coming here an' fetchin' a gang of Injuns down on us?"

I looked from him at the girl, and then at the third person, a rough hulk of a man with a redness of eye that suggested too much Monongahela. He was the one who had held us up, and he was still holding his gun. Now he spoke and said—

"I told ye two 'twould be best to shoot 'em an' tote 'em outside the valley."

"Too much free talk about killing folks," rumbled Emery, lifting his sword.

The three of them stared at the queer weapon in wonder.

"This man is my friend, Josiah Emery, of Salem, Massachusetts. You know me as Maxwell Broad. I come from Fort Harmar. More recently the two of us escaped from Bluejacket's camp, a day and half journey from here and very close to the Miami."

"From Fort Harmar, eh?" said Summers. "Last I seen o' ye it was when ye was 'cused o' killin' Sim Juber on the Kentucky shore."

"I admitted killing him. I'm glad I wiped out that scoundrel. If he was a friend of yours, Summers, I can't say I admire your friends."

"I'm a trader," was the sullen answer. "It ain't for me to measure men, nor judge 'em. Whenever I've met Juber he treated me all right. His way o' livin' ain't nothing to me. Dave Trench here may be a saint or sinner. I don't care so long as we pull together."

"Same man don't try to pry into my life twice," warned Trench.

"I'll explore your in'ards with this sword if I hear any more fighting talk," wrathfully threatened Emery.

"You men keep shet for a bit," commanded the girl, now taking the floor. "We're not interested, Mr. Broad, about who you are or where you come from. What we want to know is: How did you find your way to this hidden cabin?"

"Is it strange that white men should follow a white man's trail in this unfriendly country, where white men should stand together?" I asked.

"Follered my trail!" spluttered Summers. "Some —— trick. That trail's hid so the devil hisself couldn't foller it if he was a Injun.

"Why, there ain't no trail! We don't come here 'nough to tread a trail, an' at that, we enter from different points. Ye've got some game with all this nosing round. Now who told ye we was here?"

THE girl's flushed face showed that she also was surprized at my statement and was inclined to eye me with suspicion. So I explained the very obvious by informing them:

"A blind bear could follow your line of blazed trees, if you must know. We followed them."

Summers leaped to the door as if an arrow had pricked him, and in a choked and incredulous voice cried:

"Blazed trees! Dave Trench, look to yer gun. There's mischief afoot. These two fellers is up to a game."

Because of the girl I tried to be calm, yet I shifted my rifle so that the point was in line with Trench's breast. Summers hoarsely accused us—

"When ye tell 'bout blazed trees ye're tellin' a —— lie!"

"Not so fast," I warned. "That's a bad word to call me. If you're not the one who's trying to play a game you've only to walk into the little valley to see the fresh marks."

The girl placed a light hand on my arm and before her bewildered father could speak, gently assured me:

"We never blazed any trees. My father built this place to stay in and store goods in when he is on a trading-trip to the northern Indians. We've been mighty careful never to leave a sign in entering or leaving the valley. It doesn't seem possible the way can be marked. If you saw a blaze on a tree then some one did it to show the Indians the way."

Trench at the loop-hole began muttering and cursing, and his big hand kept wiping the sweat from his face and neck.

"I saw two dozen blazed trees. They led me here," I told the girl. "They were very, very fresh. Who entered the valley last before we came?"

She swung about and stared at Trench with blazing eyes. Her father quit scowling at me to glare at his companion.

"—— ye, did ye do that?" he hoarsely whispered.

Trench tried to hide his shame beneath an expression of ferocity. "I ain't no woodsman," he sullenly defended himself. "I was sent to this hole. Ye 'spect me, a river-man, to be up to Injun tricks? When I went out this arternoon I couldn't see no sense in guessin' how to git back. So I nicked a few trees to show the way. What of it?"

"What of it, yer houn'!" passionately cried Summers. "This comes of it! Two white men see the marks an' come here. I don't want 'em here. I don't know one of 'em; t'other was up to some queer doin's last I seen him, bein' fresh from killin' a man.

"That's bad 'nough; but it ain't the worst. Any minute a Injun may see 'em an' when they do they'll pile in here, coop us up an' take our ha'r. Ye blabbed my secret hidin'-place to all the Injuns north the Ohio. An' ye ask, 'What of it?' "

I feared the two would clinch, and I hastily interposed.

"He has called the Indians down on himself, as well as down on you and your daughter, Summers. That shows it was all a mistake on his part."

"Of course it was a mistake," gritted Trench. "I never wanted to come here, but they made me. I think jest as much 'bout my ha'r as ye do 'bout yers."

Of the three only the girl was calm, and her small face looked gray as she stood where light from a loop-hole fell upon it. The opening was very quiet. No breeze stirred the painted branches nor disturbed the Indian-Summer haze on the encircling hills. Only the squirrels, busy with storing nuts, could be heard; and when one of the little creatures scampered over the roof Summers and Trench leaped frantically to hold the door fast, forgetting the heavy bar.

"I don't think you're in any danger," I assured. "Not for a day or so. Bluejacket and his band have gone north to meet Buckongahelas. There are no Indians trailing me and Emery."

"Buckongahelas! He's a man," murmured the girl. "If we could reach him—if he is not alone——"

"He has at least twenty of his Delawares with him," I broke in.

"Then we would be safe," she concluded.

"I don't trust no Injun when they're up to mischief," snarled Summers. "We must git out of this trap an' make Losantiville."

"That can be done. Time enough if we start tomorrow morning," I said.

"I for one don't start till I rest my aching limbs," groaned Emery.

Trench gazed at him viciously and sneered:

"Who cares when ye start? A man that's big fool 'nough to tote roun' a knife like that——"

"Shut up!" thundered Emery, bristling savagely. "This old sword has chopped off a Injun's head mighty recent."

"And Bluejacket thought him such big medicine that he wanted to adopt him as his son after burning me," I added.

This impressed Summers, who showed more respect as he gazed on the angry Salem man. His mind was made up, however, for he insisted:

"Time me 'n' my gal started is right now. I wouldn't stay here this night for all the pelts the Injuns ever cured."

"But, father," the girl demurred, "you're a trader. You're well known to the Indians. They wouldn't harm you."

Trench guffawed; then suddenly became very grave as he met Summers' flashing gaze. The latter gently explained to the girl:

"They'll never forgive me for finding their lead-mine. Make ready to clear out at once."

"We have only a few bullets," she warned.

"We're runnin' away, not huntin' for a fight," was the sharp reminder.

THE three began making up their packs. Emery threw himself on a bearskin and swore he would not move. I had no fears for our safety, and had not the girl been in the party I would have rejoiced to see the two men leave.

Trench, in my opinion, was a thorough rascal, while Summers must have had dark chapters in his life. His fear of the Indians, especially of Buckongahelas, was a mighty poor recommendation.

The girl, now that I had leisure to study her, fascinated me to a strange degree. She was so slim, so lithe, so browned by the elements, so cool of gaze and tantalizing of lips. She appealed to me as a woods sprite more than as a woman.

The effect of her person and mannerisms on my senses was not due to a lack of acquaintance with the sex, as my people in Pittsburg were most worthy folk. During my ten years on the river I had taken frequent furloughs home and to the Virginia towns, and had brought back with me the friendship of gracious women. Nor was culture lacking in the cabins on the Kentucky Shore and at Marietta, although at the last named the natural austerity of the New Englanders was likely to mislead one in forming an estimate of the charms of their women.

I fancy that it was the wild, unconventional note in the girl's personality that held my attention so closely. Although still garbed in a hunter's tunic and trousers, she seemed to radiate an atmosphere of daintiness. While her small person seemed to vibrate with confidence and courage she gave no suggestion of the hoiden. She was a wonderful little woman, and how she could ever be the daughter of her father was a bewildering enigma to me.

I whispered to Emery—

"We'd best go along with them."

"Not by a danged sight. You said we'd be safe here——"

"But their leaving will make a trail. The Indians will cross it and follow it back until they strike the blazed trees. If they catch us again they'll paint both of us black. And, friend, it is not good to eat fire."

With a groan of disgust he scrambled to his feet and wearily leaned against the wall. Summers had now slung on his pack and was opening the door. Although eager to remain with the girl, I volunteered—

"I'll go ahead."

"You're very tired," she said. "Let Trench go ahead."

"But he's no woodsman by his own tell," I remonstrated.

"Is that so, young feller?" he sneered. "Wal, he's woodsman 'nough to see if any o' them houn's is round."

"Ye said there wa'n't any chance of 'em bein' in these parts," added Summers.

I had satisfied my conscience by making the offer, and I fell in beside the girl much pleased with my good luck. Trench took the lead with a bold, truculent swagger, affecting to be at ease and in his natural element, yet beginning to roll his eyes and turn his head from side to side before we were two rods from the cabin.

Behind him went Summers, rifle over his left arm and his head bowed. His preoccupation showed that he did not believe any Indians were near the valley. The girl and I came next, Emery bringing up the rear.

The only thing that aroused Summers was the sight of a blazed tree. Each time he spotted one he fell to dropping oaths into his beard.

"I'm mighty glad to see you again," I murmured to the girl.

"We never meet each other unless there is trouble," she sighed.

"I was lucky to meet you when I was in trouble with Harpe and his gang. They had me cornered. Few minutes more and they'd have killed me."

"Oh, never that. No, no! Not so bad as that," she softly protested. "I know he's rough in his ways, something of a brute to his slaves, but not a murderer." She shivered slightly, and I carelessly said—

"You should be a better judge than I, having seen him so often."

"Not often," she corrected. "I've been to his place twice with father besides the day we met you near the crick. They've always treated me well. I wish father didn't go there because they're curious to find out about his lead-mine. Sometimes I fear some of the men hanging round the tavern might try to follow him; but I haven't any fear they'd harm him."

I wondered why she didn't comment on the errands that took her father to the tavern, but she probably was given plausible excuses.

"What did Harpe say after I got away?" I asked.

She laughed and lifted a face that was altogether very lovely.

"He looked it. He wouldn't say it before me."

"Then you must have a powerful influence over him," I gravely remarked.

"I have," was the quick retort. "He wants me to marry him."

"But you never will?" I demanded.

Up came the small head and her eyes met mine steadily as she coolly informed me:

"I don't reckon I've any call to talk my affairs with you. I've seen you three times, and every time you was being held up with a gun."

"First time by you," I reminded.

"No matter by whom," she returned. "A woman don't like to think of a man always being at the wrong end of a gun. If I held you up I helped you out, if what you say about Abner Harpe is true."

"Perhaps I can figure to better advantage some time," I meekly said.

"I don't care a persimmon how you figure," she said.

"Say or do anything you wish, only never marry that monster," I said.

Instantly her face was all dimples and smiles, and her eyes held the prettiest laugh of all, and she was making my heart jump by declaring—

"I shall never marry."

"You don't have to go as far as to say that," I was protesting, when she touched my arm and stared toward the hillside on our immediate right.

"The sumac-bushes moved. Bird or squirrel," I said.

"It was something," she whispered, quickening her steps to overhaul her father.

I kept at her side. Emery made awkward progress of it at our heels. Ahead the path made a bend and the bush-growth pressed in to its very borders.

"I'm afraid of something," whispered the girl, reaching forward and touching her father's arm.

"Then don't show it," he threw back over his shoulder without turning his head.

But I saw the hand holding the rifle tighten its grasp and I knew he was on the alert.

IT WAS in the atmosphere, a foreboding of evil. The innocent valley path suddenly bristled with terrible possibilities. I had great reluctance to continue further.

Trench, who had kept some rods ahead of us, slowed down his gait until we were within thirty feet of him. Emery in the rear ceased his monolog of cursing and crowded closer to me. Summers, a veteran woodsman, still walked with head bowed, but from the corner of his mouth he warned us:

"Don't show a sign of bein' skeered. I dassent call to Trench to come back for fear he'll lose his nerve."

"Then you saw something in the sumac-bushes?" I mumbled.

"There, an' close down by the path. If we turn an' run we'll be ketched."

"Let your daughter stumble and go lame, then call on him to come and help carry her."

This would put Trench on an equal footing with us if we had to race back to the cabin. Summers slightly nodded his head, and the girl almost immediately slipped and fell and I caught her in my arms. She acted her part inimitably as she stood on one foot groaning and trying to take a step.

"Hi, Trench," bawled out Summers. "Come back here an' give the gal a lift. Hurt her ankle. Can't walk."

Trench hesitated and because of his natural surliness passed up his chance of living.

"Let the big lummox help tote her. I'm breakin' trail," he called back.

Then he advanced toward the bend with vigorous strides.

"Be ready to run," muttered Summers, turning and passing us and going to a clump of saplings with drawn knife as if to cut a cane.

"What'n sin's the matter?" asked Emery impatiently.

"Go with Summers and pick out a good stick for a cane," I said.

Then to the girl:

"Begin limping after them. Every foot nearer the cabin is that much clear gain."

"But Trench? He must be warned."

"If you call out they'll jump us."

"Jump me, is what you're thinking. He's a brute, but he must have his chance."

And before I could stop her she was shrilly calling:

"Dave Trench! Oh, Trench!"

He halted and snarled back—

"Wal, what is it now?"

"Come here and help me."

"Let yer old man an' the codfish-eater help ye."

"Trench, come here," she commanded.

"Who'n —— be ye to give me orders?" he jeered.

"You fool! Come back here. The Indians are just ahead."

Even then he might have withdrawn from his advanced position, for I doubt whether any Indian in ambush understood her quick speech. But Trench could not play the game. With a wild howl he swung his rifle about toward the bushes and clumsily started to run to us. There came a volley of shots and arrows, and Trench went down riddled by balls and struck half a dozen times with arrows.

"Run!" I howled, as if any one needed to be urged.

Emery started at a ponderous gallop. Summers held back till the girl and I were up to him. He ran on with his hand lightly held under her elbow to guard against a stumble. I turned and fired at a savage half out of cover, and he remained there on his hands and knees for a second, then fell on his face.

Emery collected his senses, or lost them, and turned back and joined me. I shouted profanely for him to run, but he leaped aside and began swinging his long sword and emitting most astounding yells of defiance. Arrows were now whipping about us, but the Indians as yet had not had time to reload their muskets. The bushes seemed to be filled with them. I glanced over my shoulder and saw that Summers and the girl were well on their way toward the cabin.

"Come on!" I shouted to Emery. "Now we can hoof it!"

For a moment he seemed loath to fall back, then picked up his feet and ran swiftly. There was only one reason so far as I could make out why the Indians did not break cover and rush us after they had killed Trench; the reason as I saw it was that they had never been up the valley since the cabin was built, and never suspected that we were retreating to get behind stout walls. Believing that it was only a question of tracking us down and killing us at their leisure, they halted to reload; and that gave us the margin we needed.

As we came in sight of the cabin several warriors raced from cover to get Trench's hair, while two ambitious ones came scurrying after us. I shot the leader and the other leaped aside into the woods, but not before he had seen the cabin. His voice, pitched high in a succession of sharp yelps, instantly got the attention of his mates; and he must have informed them of the cabin, for the entire band poured into the trail and endeavored to overtake us.

I wheeled and presented my rifle and sent those in the lead ducking to cover, but as I did not fire they quickly pressed forward again, guessing that my gun was empty.

When we got within ten feet of the cabin door the girl darted ahead to open it and two arrows *plunked* into the logs close to her curly head. Her father threw up his gun and brought down a warrior wearing three feathers.

The door swung open and the girl and her father passed inside. Emery faced the enemy and swung his sword in huge circles, the last sunbeams flashing a wheel of fire from the blade as it revolved. Although they knew that two of our rifles were empty, leaving only the girl's, the sight of the sword astounded them and brought them to a momentary halt.

"Go in, you idiot!" I called to Emery.

The strange fellow was actually reluctant to do so. No physical odds were great enough to make his stubborn spirit quail; and yet he would be in the dumps of despair because of a few words carved on a tree. To get him inside I had to go ahead, and he followed me mouthing fearful threats of what he would do to the enemy.

SUMMERS was fairly unstrung, and I could hear his teeth click when he tried to talk. The girl held herself under iron control. She was the first to remind us that there were scarcely any balls for the guns.

The embers in the fireplace were quickly covered with seasoned wood, and she was directing her father to bring lead. Summers hesitated, then raised a small trap in the floor, concealed by the bearskin, and produced a mass of lead.

I had seen similar masses brought into an Indian camp by warriors, but could never induce them to tell where they got it. Stories of fabulously rich lead-mines were common throughout the Ohio and Illinois country in '89; and when I saw Summers' specimen I was convinced that he had located a mine.

Noting my glance, he hurriedly explained—

"Traded for it."

And yet, although he was badly frightened, he eyed me furtively, then slammed down the trap. His whole manner was that of one trying to conceal something. As I had seen the lead it could scarcely be that. The girl hacked off small pieces of the ore, placed them in a frying-pan, set the pan over the fire and arranged some bullet-molds.

My eyes wanted to watch her, but I compelled myself to face the ugly business outside. Stepping to a loop-hole, I peered out. There was no sign of Indians, and I prayed that they would hold off until we had run a few bullets.

Summers was like one overtaken by inexorable fate who knew the uselessness of struggling longer. He crouched on the bearskin, his eyes lusterless except when they rested on the girl, when a spasm of pain would twist his dark face.

The girl proceeded with her work with the same precision and deliberation she would display in roasting a turkey, her curly locks gathered at the nape of her slim neck by a bit of ribbon, her small face grave with concern for her task.

"The Indians have turned back to pow-wow," I said.

"They've skun out for good. Let's be quitting this danged trap," cried Emery, his imagination, or superstitions, beginning to work once he was denied action.

"There's a hole under the floor that runs out the back end into a bunch of hazel-bushes," spoke up the girl. "When it gets darker we might try that."

"Don't tell everything ye know!" her father harshly upbraided her. Before any of us could speak he lost his fire and groaned:

"It don't matter. It's all ended now. Secrets ain't no good any longer."

"Why did you bring your daughter up here? Why did you come up here?" I asked.

"It's always been safe 'nough. I've traded with the Injuns an' never was harmed even when they was on the path. Mebbe they've changed an' are ag'in' me since I found the lead-mine."

"But why did you come?" I persisted.

"None o' yer business."

"Why, father! We come to get some goods you'd hid up here," the girl reproached him.

"Yes, yes," he contritely said. "Never liked to be questioned. Brought Dave Trench to help tote 'em down because a hoss wa'n't safe these times."

"Did you hide 'em under the cabin?" innocently asked Emery.

"No!" growled Summers, his eyes taking on a nasty look. "Don't stick yer nose into my business, or ye'll lose it."

Emery would have bristled up at this threat had not the girl clutched his arm and in pantomime begged him to be silent. Summers went on—

"Wal, do we try to git out through the hole?"

"Before it grows dark?" I scoffed. "We must wait. If they'll hold off until we get some bullets we can make them sick of the game."

"They'll never sicken of the game," was the moody reply. "They're mostly Mingoes."

This was bad news if true. I had taken it for granted that they were Bluejacket's men, and would not risk much for a few scalps. The one scalp had cost them very dear. Now that we were strongly "forted" the toll would mount higher. It was humiliating to have had another observe more than I had; for I took great pride in my knowledge of the red men.

"Sure they're Mingoes?" I asked.

His eyes flashed with scorn.

"Think I've been a Injun-trader for years an' not know the varments?" he growled. "Feller I shot with the turkey feathers in his ha'r was Red Wolf, one o' their best warriors. They'll never quit till they cover his bones with our scalps. I seen only four Shawnee among 'em."

Their very name, meaning "stealthy," or "treacherous," indicated how the Delawares and their allies looked on this tribe. They were formerly of the Five Nations in New York and had left the Long House twoscore years before.

Regardless of how peaceably the Long House might be conducting itself, this detached band was ever hostile to the whites. The majority of the seceders were from the Seneca nation; and after they had settled around the headwaters of the Sandusky and the Scioto they were commonly known as the Senecas of Sandusky.

We men of the floating frontier favored the Algonkin term derived from Mingwe; for be they Seneca, or malcontents from the southern tribes, they had little truck with the Long House, but found their interests to be with the wild Indians of the Far Nations. No treaties made on the Ohio could stay their axes. Their villages were in the northern wilderness, and they had small fears of retribution. If necessary they could retreat to Mack'nack. Above all else their fierce Seneca blood demanded wars and triumphs.

There were three rifles in the cabin and half a dozen trade muskets. Summers loaded the muskets in a spiritless manner while the girl continued "frying" and molding bullets. She turned out the shiny balls very rapidly.

There were several horns of powder in the room and a keg of it under the floor. So we were well supplied with ammunition.

The door was of oak, double thick, with two bars to hold it. It would dull many an Indian ax before a hole could be made through it.

The roof was our one point of weakness. Not that it lacked strength, but the continued dry spell would make it burn easily. The prolonged absence of the Indians was proof of their determination to use fire-arrows instead of risking an open assault.

I glanced to the roof and then caught Summers' eye. He read my thoughts and nodded.

"How about water?" I asked.

"Not a drop inside here," answered the girl. "We'd never dreamed of being discovered and we forgot to fill the buckets. There is a spring just beyond the hazel-bushes where the little tunnel comes out."

"Then that's settled. I'll crawl through the hole——"

"No, no," she quickly objected. "You would be seen. Then they would know about the tunnel. Better go without water till dark than to spoil our one chance of escape."

I heartily agreed to this and burned with shame at my lack of wit in suggesting the use of the tunnel. Emery, hearing us talking of water, began working his big mouth, and I heard him groan:

"——! But ain't I dry!"

"Suck a bullet," I advised, passing him a ball.

With a snarl he struck the ball from my hand. I retrieved it and knelt to help the girl—rather, to use that as an excuse for being near her. Her father was watching from a loop-hole. For a moment I forgot our peril as she turned her face, her gaze meeting mine questioningly. If my eyes told her anything the confession could not have been disagreeable to her, for her lips fluttered in a smile; then her head dropped and she became busy with the bubbling lead.

My visions were brutally interrupted by the sound of the door opening. Summers cried out like a wounded panther, and I found myself on my feet with rifle clubbed.

The door stood open, the two bars being removed, and no enemy in sight. I rubbed my eyes blankly.

* * *

WITH another inarticulate cry Summers flung himself forward and with a panting intake of breath closed the door and dropped the bars. It was not until he had done this that I realized that Emery was gone. I sprang to a loop-hole to see whether there was any chance of rescuing him from his madness, but he was not in sight.

"The big fool went with the bucket," puffed Summers.

That was why I had not seen him from my loop-hole. He had passed back of the cabin. I removed the bars and against Summers' threat to lock me out stepped over the threshold. The woods remained silent. Savage eyes were watching me, but I glimpsed none of the vermin.

I looked around the corner of the cabin and beheld Emery leisurely taking his time in tipping up the huge bucket. Standing upright in the ground at his side was his tall sword. He was drinking his fill before fetching back the bucket; which was economical and very considerate of us.

Every second I expected a flight of arrows, a rain of balls, or a rush of painted forms from the painted wilderness. The opening slept on.

Now Emery was returning, the bucket slopping the cold water against his legs—and I begrudged every drop spilled—the big sword resting over his shoulder. I tapped on the door and heard the girl speak sharply. Summers lifted a bar and barely allowed room for us to squeeze inside. He had completely collapsed so far as moral courage was concerned. He was one death-struck.

"There, folks," boomed Emery's big voice, "just guzzle that down an' I'll fetch some more. Say, there's a whole big hole of it just bubbling out the earth."

"Is there another bucket?" I asked the girl.

"Two. One is filled with corn. I'll get them."

She fished them out from under the floor, and I fancied that Summers hovered near the opening to keep me back did I offer to assist. She emptied the corn on to the bearskin and I was reaching for the buckets when Emery violently shoved me aside and, seizing both, opened the door and went out.

I stepped outside, leaving my rifle within reach just inside the door. Emery was moving along as confidently as if walking to some Salem well-sweep.

The girl stood at a loop-hole covering the spring. I did not believe the besiegers would permit two more buckets of water.

This time Emery did not pause to drink, but filled the buckets and turned toward the cabin. Whether it was the water or the absence of his sword that caused the Indians to interfere I do not know. Perhaps both.

A gun barked in the edge of the woods and several arrows flew by his head. A naked form darted from the underbrush and ran silently after Emery. I snatched my rifle, but before I could warn him to jump aside to give me a chance a gun was discharged inside the cabin and the savage plunged head-foremost to earth.

Emery had not known how near the red death had approached him, but stared at me in a puzzled fashion. Then he noticed the arrows feathering the path ahead of him; yet he did not hurry, nor did I dare urge haste. If others charged I feared he would halt and give battle with his naked hands; but no more of the foe showed themselves. The gunfire, however, now encircled the cabin and the arrows came in swarms.

Controlling my outward appearance, I stood aside for him to enter. As I made to follow I found myself held back. A long war arrow had passed through the slack of my hunting-shirt and had pinned me to a log.

With a scream of fear Summers leaped to the door just as I was breaking the arrow, and attempted to close it with me on the outside. Something streaked by my eyes; a strangled cry came from the doorway. I sprang over the threshold to find Summers on the floor, shot through the throat. He bled to death from the big vein almost before I could properly replace the bars.

The nature of the tragedy was unspeakably horrible. Frontier women by many hundreds have seen their menfolk killed by ax and arrow. But to be cooped up in the cabin with the Indians' unrelenting ferocity written on the sanguinary floor was intolerable. The whole room seemed to be a welter of red.

I placed the man on a pile of hides and examined him, although I knew he was dead. The girl stood rigid, the lead-ladle in one hand, a mold in the other, her face frozen in its first expression of horror. Picking up a bucket of water, I would have washed the blood through the cracks had not Emery stopped me, croaking—

"We'll need that."

He was right, and I surrendered the bucket. The girl staggered to the fireplace and fell on her knees, her face in her hands, her shoulders rising and falling, but with scarcely a sound of a sob.

Emery in a very workman-like manner mopped up the floor with some trade strouds snatched from the wall, and then threw a hide over the spot. Leaving him to keep watch, I went to the girl, patted her shoulder and whispered:

"The sun sinks. We must be ready."

"It goes down red," she shuddered. "Oh, my father! My father!"

I muttered some platitude about his being at rest, at having died painlessly. God knows I pitied her, but I could not bring myself to believe that the dead man was aught but a rascal. Yet he was her father and had had affection for her.

I choked up in sympathy with her loneliness, not because of her loss. I tried to comfort her and could not speak intelligently. She sensed my desire to help, however, and took my hand and held it tightly for a few moments. Once she murmured:

"After all, it does not matter. We must all die very soon. He is only a bit ahead of us."

If such a belief would render her tractable for the next few hours I would encourage it. Time enough to lament the dead after we were back on the river.

Dusk filled the opening. The haze on the hilltops deepened. The forest walls seemed to draw closer to the cabin. Now the savages could approach very near without being detected. That they were ignorant of Summers' death was shown by the absence of their death-yell.

I remained by the girl. She was now very quiet and leaned against me.

"A FALLING star!" exclaimed Emery.

Almost in the same breath he cried—

"——! It's going to bust us."

The fire-arrow plumped into the dry roof. I wound a blood-soaked stroud round a pole, slipped through the door and scrubbed out the little patch of fire, and was back inside before the foe realized my action. Or else they failed to make me out in the fast failing light. I found the girl erect and staring at the door, waiting for me to come.

"You mustn't do that again," she quietly said.

"We must leave here before they fire the cabin and light up the opening, and we can't go until it gets darker," I replied.

Already it was difficult to read her face, so rapidly had the night crowded in.

"——!" exploded Emery.

This time the heavens rained fire-arrows from all sides. Some fell short and blazed but briefly in the turf around the cabin. Others stuck in the walls and burned out without doing any damage. But fully a dozen lodged on the roof.

Before I could unbar the door Emery was astride of the cross-beam and with his long sword was forcing two of the roof logs apart.

"Gimme the pole an' a cloth," he briskly commanded.

I poured water over a stroud and passed it to him on a pole. Forcing his body through the opening, he extended his long arms and scoured out the flames and coals. And once more we were reprieved.

But this mode of defense led to nothing. There would come a time when the flames would bite deep, when our water would give out, when some of us must sleep, when the Indians would creep close and shoot whoever showed a head above the ridge-pole. I glanced out a loop-hole and decided:

"It is dark enough. We must make a break for it while they're busy preparing their arrows for the next volley."

"I can't leave him here to be scalped," she sobbed, her small figure trembling against mine as she fought to stave off hysteria.

"Show me the keg of powder. He shall not be scalped," I promised.

She pointed to the floor. Emery opened the trap, squeezed through the hole and passed up the keg. Calling him to give a hand, I dragged the hide on which Summers rested to the opening and the two of us got him below and stowed away at one side of the cellar. It was pitch dark down there and we could work only through the sense of touch.

After we had disposed of the dead man my fingers came in contact with another keg. Thinking that it was powder, and that the last impression on the Indians might as well be a good one, I carried it too beneath the trap before observing it was much too light to hold powder.

The top was fastened with several small pegs. Removing these, I thrust in my hand and was puzzled to fish forth several pieces of jewelry such as women wear. My first thought was of trade goods, but even in the dusk I could see that they were too well made to be Indian gewgaws. Besides pieces for the bosom and rings for the ears there were rings for the fingers, a strange collection for an Indian-trader to possess.

Then came the suspicion that Summers had bartered for them with the Indians, that the latter had stripped them from white victims. This reasoning would be logical except for the fact that the savages would part with any article in their possession to obtain these very trinkets.

Then Harpe's evil face came before my eyes. Summers had had some sort of alliance with him.

With a chill of horror I accepted the truth. The contents of the keg represented loot from flatboats. The pirates had consigned it to Summers' custody either to sell or to keep as his share. Either belief linked him up with the pirates.

Putting the keg back beside the dead man, I climbed out of the hole, knocked in the head of the powder-keg and scattered several handfuls of powder over the floor. The next flight of arrows would burn holes through the roof and coals would drop down, fire the loose powder and explode the keg. The Mingoes would lose a scalp, and Summers would lie buried beneath the ruins of his hidden cabin.

"There comes an arrow," softly spoke the girl at a loop-hole.

Picking up a pouch of balls and our weapons, I called on the girl to descend through the trap. I followed her and closed the trap. She clung to my side—not from fear of the darkness, but because she was overcome at leaving her father there.

"He will not be molested by man or beast," I said. "Show us the opening."

Emery, who had not ascended from the cellar and who had been investigating while I was spilling the powder, now called out:

"Here it is. Tight squeeze for me though. Got my sword?"

The girl took my hand and led me to him and I gave him his weapon. Outside there arose a hideous cheering and the rapid *plump*, *plump* of the fire-arrows. It was all important that we gain the end of the tunnel before the burning cabin should reveal our escape.

Giving the girl her rifle, I pushed her to the opening. I made Emery go next, although I feared that his broad form would choke the passage. Carrying the dead man's rifle in addition to my own, I brought up the rear, expecting at every moment that the powder would explode. With my imagination at work I became frantic to get clear of the hole; but before crawling more than six feet I came up against Emery.

"Get along! Get along! We'll be buried alive!" I gasped.

"Stuck!" he managed to make me hear.

I worked out my knife, pricked him generously and warned—

"Keg of powder's going to explode, once the fire hits the train I've laid."

It was the knife rather than the warning that galvanized him into superhuman efforts; and with a smothered howl he began twisting and squirming and dragging his bulk ahead. I kept at his heels and caught one in the face as he lashed out to get a purchase with his toe.

Then came a blessed mouthful of night air, and I knew that the Salem man had won clear and that we were inside the hazel-bushes at the lip of the spring.

As I crawled free from the hole a slim hand found mine and a low voice warned me to be quiet. More need to caution Emery, who was drinking like a horse. I crawled toward the babbling spring and drank deeply. Then I took time to look about.

And we could look, for now the darkness was lifted and held at bay by the blazing cabin. The girl pressed against me and stared round-eyed at the flaming structure; and I pitied her for the sad thoughts within her small head, poor thing!

Several figures darted by our hiding-place, the Mingoes eager to kill and scalp when their victims ran from the furnace. I rose to my knees and could see other figures running in from all directions. Then came the sound of axes on the stout door and the popping of guns as some thrust their weapons through the loop-holes and fired at random. Accompanying it all was the death-halloa, chanted in a grim chorus.

"They'll soon know we're not in there," she was whispering, when the cabin walls flew outward and the roof shot into the sky.

For a few seconds the flying logs and coals washed out the stars, then rained back to earth; and the night rushed in. Aye, and something more gruesome than logs went heavenward; for the powder sent more than one Mingo victim after Summers. The survivors ran *ki-yiing* in a panic to the thick woods. With the girl's hand in mine and with Emery trotting behind I softly led the way toward the mouth of the valley.

CHAPTER VII

DOWN THE RIVER

WE WENT from the valley along the blazed trees, although in the night these could not be seen. This was the shorter way and also the more dangerous, but the girl and I believed that the Indians were demoralized by their losses. Nor could they know that any of the cabin's inmates had escaped. All their energies would be exerted in leaving the disastrous place.

The girl was an adept in woodcraft and could learn no tricks of stealthy travel from me. Emery was a sad hindrance, his sword given to clanging against rocks and catching between trees. However, with me ahead and the girl behind we managed to pilot him to the mouth of the valley without bringing any of the savages down upon us.

Now we halted and held a whispered council of war; and again I stood by the girl's side and felt her warm breath on my cheek as we bowed our heads close together for greater secrecy.

Like a true pioneer woman she wasted no time in useless lamentations for her father. Her heart ached, and I pitied her, but the work ahead demanded our best endeavors.

"We must make for the river," she said.

"Of course. You must go to your folks," I agreed.

"I have no people," she informed me. "No one."

"Then I'll adopt you as my darter," declared Emery. "I'm old enough to be your father. I've got a little property back in Salem that ain't been settled up yet, and I ain't got any folks to leave it to. I like your spunk."

"You're a good man," she softly said. "But I can look out for myself."

"You can't live in the woods," I protested. "And you can't go to the settlements unless you have some one to live with. Don't you know of some family——"

"If I did I would not go and ask to be taken in," she hotly declared.

"S'pose we let that part of it wait till we hit the river," Emery said.

This was sage advice, and neither the girl nor I could improve upon it. Time enough to consider what should follow the end of the journey when the journey was completed. The first move was to travel a safe distance from the valley and find a camping-place.

The girl offered to lead us to a secluded spot a few miles south, and although there was not even any starlight to help us she undertook her task with confidence. Feeling her way, and softly cautioning us of the obstacles as she came to them, she conducted us a short distance due west and halted at a rivulet. This she said was the headwaters of a creek that flowed by the proposed hiding-place.

Crossing this in the inky darkness, she soon located a narrow but well-defined path, one of the ancient north-and-south Indian trails. The traveling was easy and we needed no light so long as our moccasins kept the trace. About midnight the girl halted and informed us:

"Rocks to our right. Father used to hide trade goods there. I can find the place, I think. A hole under a big rock. Wait here a bit."

Before we could detain her or insist on going with her she was gone. It seemed a very long time before the bushes rustled at my side and her small hand found my arm. I took Emery's hand and followed her through a débris of tree-trunks and boulders until she announced:

"We're right before it. Put out your hand and you can feel the rock."

The shelter consisted of a recess under a ledge. It was scarcely a dozen feet deep. With a grunt of content Emery threw down his sword, dropped on the carpet of dead leaves and was at once fast asleep and snoring terrifically. I pinched his nose until he awoke with a gurgling cry and attempted to secure his sword, thinking I was an Indian. Being told his fault, he promised to snore no more, fell asleep and snored as lustily as ever.

"It doesn't matter," she murmured. "It can't be heard by any one in the trail. No one will quit the trail in the night. Good night."

"But a minute, please," I begged, groping for her hand. "You need a friend. You saved my life. You'll let me serve you?"

"Saved your life after threatening to shoot you. Of course I wouldn't have shot you even if you'd paddled ashore and left me behind."

"Thank God I didn't leave you behind. Then I would never have met *the* woman."

"Good night. I'm tired and very sad."

"Good night. Only remember, I am always your friend. You have no folks. Let me be your big brother."

"A big brother!" she faintly whispered. "Oh, dear Lord! If I only had a big brother!"

"You have," I stoutly insisted. "Good night."

I awoke with a chill, for the night was very cold. In our haste to get clear of the burning cabin we had not thought to bring blankets, and my packet was in possession of Bluejacket's men.

I stripped off my long fringed hunting-shirt and reconnoitered until I located her. She was curled up like a kitten. My hand touched her hand and resulted in a discovery which made me feel sad.

Gently placing the shirt over her, I crawled back beyond Emery, but it was some time before I could get to sleep. At first I was inclined to feel affronted. But gradually I grew to realize how hard and lonely her lot had been, how her young years had been spent in eternally being on guard, meeting few men, if any, whom she could trust.

When the gray dawn awoke me I found my shirt thrown over me and she was standing by my side. Emery still snored on, his big head resting on the long handle of the sword.

I pulled on the shirt and stood up. It was cold, and although the sun would soon be up little of its warmth would penetrate the forest-tops to cheer us.

"You mustn't do that again. You must have 'most frozen," she said.

"I thought you'd accept me as a friend even if not as a big brother," I returned.

"Why, you are my friend—a brother, if you wish."

And her eyes were round with surprize at my mood.

"You were awake when I went to you last night," I accused her.

"No, no," she denied, but with a warm color in her brown cheeks.

"Awake and with a naked knife in your hand," I bitterly complained.

With a little cry she placed a hand on my arm and defended herself:

"I've been so used to looking out for myself. So many rough men. It's second nature for me to keep my claws out. But

I do trust you and your friend. You'll forgive it? It was all so good of you."

"Nothing to forgive," I relented.

Then, telling her to bide in the cave till I returned, I took a scout of several miles without discovering any signs of Indians. This did not surprize me, for the Mingoes were traveling north when they turned aside to enter the valley and would have no heart for more fighting until they had made new medicines. The belligerent Shawnees were collecting around Bluejacket over on the Little Miami, and the bands we might meet in the woods would be straggling hunters or fort visitors making for home after a drunk.

I ventured to shoot a deer, and in doing so found my hands so stiffened by the chilly air that I reloaded by dropping the bullet from my mouth and then ramming it home with the wiping-stick. I cut off several portions of the meat and left the rest for the scavengers.

This wastage recalled to mind how the first settlers in Kentucky, erecting their cabins in the fairest game region in the world, with bear, deer and bison, let alone turkey, in such prodigious numbers as to seem inexhaustible, were forced to go twenty miles or more for game after a few weeks of destroying. It was grimly ironical that these very men should be very jealous of any strangers killing meat near their settlements.

ON RETURNING to the rock I found Emery about to start in search of me with the girl powerless to restrain him. After she had indignantly explained his stubborn purpose she added—

"And he wanted to adopt me!"

"If I do you'll have to hark when I speak," he mildly assured her. "It's a darter's place to obey."

The discussion quickly ended when I began building a fire and Emery learned that I intended roasting enough meat to last until we made the Ohio. The girl accepted the report of my scout at face value and did not demur when I continued to keep the blaze alive long after we had eaten our fill.

The cooked meat was divided into two packs, although Emery was eager to carry it all; and with the girl in the rear and myself in the lead we resumed our tramp through the silent woods.

Could I have made the trip alone with the girl, or had our companion been somewhat versed in woodcraft, that journey through the October woods, with the gold and crimson leaves floating down upon us, would have been the most delectable experience of my life. But it was necessary to keep the Salem man in the middle with instructions to keep in sight of me, with the girl to shoo him back to the proper course when he wandered aside. Moving in this fashion, I had no word with her, except as we stopped for water or to eat, until we made a camp for the night. During the entire day we saw no signs of Indians.

I had planned to talk with the girl once Emery was asleep, but she was not inclined for my company. Her father's death weighed upon her, but sorrow could scarcely explain her cold manner when I attempted to converse with her. She acted as if she found me repellent, and after eating withdrew to one side.

Emery went to sleep the minute he stretched out on the ground. I called to the girl and urged her to camp by the fire, saying I would withdraw.

"You'd be crazy to go away," she curtly answered. "If I want a fire I can build it."

"You seem to find me so distasteful—" I began.

"Don't be silly," she tersely broke in. "When I find folks not to my liking I always tell 'em quick enough. There's never any guesswork about it. I'm out of sorts and I don't want to talk to any one or see any one. Good night."

The howling of wolves came to me. They had found the remains of the deer, had followed my trail and were now closing in. There was nothing to fear from them, of course, as the season was not far enough advanced to make them desperate through hunger.

To me there was a sad rhythm in their chorus and not at all a noise to disturb the lightest slumbers; quite the contrary, like the frogs' chorus in April. Yet there must have been something sinister in their crying, for Emery suddenly sat up and glared wildly about. I sought to reason with him, explaining that the brutes would attack only the crippled and the weak, but he remained peculiarly disturbed by the creatures.

When I opened my eyes at the first touch of the gray light it was to behold him with his back against a tree, his sword across his knees, snoring tremendously. I had no doubt but that he had intended to stand guard all night. When I aroused him he readily admitted that he had tried to keep awake and met my derision by saying:

"Mebbe they wouldn't 'a' nabbed me—although I don't admit it. But they'd take our meat. So I kept watch. I hadn't been asleep five minutes when you woke me. You 'n the gal can thank me for your breakfast."

I replenished the fire and turned to get the meat. It was gone. We had suspended it from a branch, and the rawhide thongs were bitten in two. I pointed out the empty cords to Emery and refrained from comment.

"Good Lawd! Then them wolves did get it and we go hungry after all," he groaned.

"Not if you ain't above turkey," spoke up the drawling, musical voice of Nancy Summers.

As light as a floating leaf, she had gained our fire, and over one slim shoulder was slung a big gobbler. She said she had knocked it over with a club.

The girl amazed me. Perhaps "befuddled" would be nearer right. Now she was all good nature and sunshine, and obviously anxious to please me. On the stolid Emery she lavished little attentions that would well near have turned my head. When she would catch me staring at her she seemed secretly amused, and the mischief in her small face was most tantalizing.

"Last night you would not talk to me," I complained. "Now you can not talk enough."

"And you ain't pleased either way," she replied, picking up her rifle. "Let's start."

The day's march was a repetition of the day before—three of us in single file, with Emery herded in the middle. When we made our first stop by a spring I was delighted to find that the girl's mood had persisted. From our parting in the morning I feared it was transient.

She was most companionable. Her good-fellowship was so alluring that she forced even the dour Salem man to smile. I began to believe that she had fought a battle with herself during the night and, while yet oppressed by the loss of her father, had decided that it was her duty to contribute good cheer and kindness to each day's struggles. Very possibly the fact that we were nearing the end of the journey also influenced her to her gentle mood.

But once we separated where would she go? The thought was always foremost among my worries.

WE HAD gone into camp late at night, knowing that we were within a few miles of the river. It was a raw, cold morning with the north wind whipping showers of leaves from their clattering branches. We bolted our slim rations and hurried to make the bank.

Now the girl took the lead, and for a bit was lost to view as she glided through the bushes. Soon she reappeared and waved her hand as she ran toward us. That she had made a discovery was very obvious. Leaving Emery to follow as he would, I ran to meet her, my face filled with the unvoiced question.

"It's a Kentucky flat," she whispered as if fearing that we might be overheard.

"Why didn't you hail it?" I reproached her.

"There's something queer about it. No one on deck. No sound of life. The steering-sweep trails. Your friend might be upset if it's another piece of the business that sent you two to the Indians."

"I'll have a look at it," I muttered.

I crept cautiously through the bushes and saw it, just as she had described it. Apparently it was deserted. A cross-current was slowly pushing it toward our bank.

"A boat!" joyfully cried Emery, bursting through the bushes.

Then very slowly—

"But the people—where's the people?"

His strong face grew wild with the horror the empty craft now created.

"I'm going to have it," I quietly announced. "We're miles above where the Indians captured us. We'll make Losantiville by water. Who goes for it; you or I? It'll swing in inside the next minute."

"I can swim better'n you," mumbled Emery. "But—oh Lawd! If them sights should be repeated I'd jump overboard, have a cramp an' stay under."

"Stay here with Miss Summers," I ordered, giving him my rifle and belt and retaining only my knife.

"Don't do it!" begged the girl. "See how the wind has kicked up the water! It's more'n a fresh; it's flood strength. We can keep on afoot."

"Not when we can have a boat," I retorted.

Darting into the bush and making down-stream to where I believed the flat would make its nearest approach to the bank, I peeled off my clothes and tied them on top of my head. Under the cord I pushed my knife; and as the boat came inshore, then straightened out on a course that would take her back to mid-stream, I plunged in.

The water was cold and the current was strong, but the swim was boy's play. I glanced back and saw the girl on one knee, her rifle covering the empty deck, and Emery standing ready to give her my gun should she fire her own.

I caught a rope trailing from the stern and allowed myself to be towed for half a minute while I listened for some sound of life. Then I drew myself aboard and into the "barnyard," and ran through into the living-quarters. The boat was empty, nor were there any signs of a struggle.

Dressing, I gained the deck and manned the long steering-sweep while the girl and Emery raced along the bank to keep abreast of me. Below the next bend I sent the flat crashing into the bushes, and my friends jumped aboard. The girl seized a pole and helped me to push off, while Emery stood and glared about him, fearing to behold dark stains and hacked woodwork.

"Neither the work of Indians nor pirates," I assured him as we drew away from the bank. "Carried off by a sudden rise. Probably from Limestone. Nothing in it. The owners must have quit it there. They probably were bound for Lexington. It'll take us to Fort Finney. The soldiers will be glad to use it for sentry-boxes and floors. They'll give us a long dugout for it."

Emery and I took the long sweep and managed to work the boat into mid-stream, but it was impossible to keep from being swept first toward the Indian Shore and then toward the Kentucky side. It was while we were ending a long slant toward the latter shore that we saw new evidences of civilization in the form of a long pine that had been cleared of its branches as only a woodsman would do the job.

The girl, who had been standing forward, came back to us and studied the shore steadily. I pointed to the log and remarked that some settler had lost a day's work.

"There comes another. Two days' work gone," she murmured, nodding toward a second log.

One bough stuck up on this, showing that the woodsman had quit his work before the task was finished.

"Spruce," I said as the two logs drifted closer.

She wrinkled her brows, staring at the pine, then back at the spruce.

"It's queer," she murmured, as if talking to herself.

"That a sudden rise should carry off logs," I bantered.

"A pine floats deeper than a spruce," was the slow reply.

"I know that," spoke up Emery.

"Yet the spruce out there floats deeper than the pine," she continued, her eyes half-closing.

She was right. The logs were about the same size, and the pine should be floating deeper than its neighbor.

"They'll be alongside in a minute; then we'll have a closer look," I said. "There must be boughs underwater on the spruce that pull it down."

This did not satisfy her; and, cocking her rifle, she retorted:

"We'd better do our looking before they get alongside. Wonder if I can hit the butt of that bough."

She had scarcely spoken before her small-bore Kentucky rifle was at her shoulder and spitting like an angry cat. The bullet blazed a white patch at the junction of the bough and the trunk. We were greatly startled to hear a howl of pain and to behold a naked brown body swimming for the shore, one arm trailing helpless.

"Look! Look!" yelled Emery, letting go of the sweep and dancing madly up and down and waving his sword.

I already had noticed them, three other dark forms making for the shore, having quit the shelter of the spruce and allowing it to resume its natural buoyancy. My rifle was on its way to my shoulder when the Salem man released the oar. As I fired the boat swerved, throwing me off my balance, and the bullet went wide.

Dropping the gun for the girl to reload, I recaptured the sweep and fought to turn the flat away from the bank, where for all we knew a big war-party might be lurking. Despite my efforts, we were swept close inshore before we could make any progress toward the middle of the river.

If the Indians behind the floating log had any companions they failed to show themselves, although the overhanging boughs raked our deck as we heeled about to flee from the peril of an ambush. But we did glimpse several horses tied near the bank.

"After horses," commented the girl as she finished loading the rifles.

"And scalps," I sighed; for where they found horses they would find white owners.

Crossing the Ohio after horses was a regular industry among the red men, and many a good mount was taken over to the Indian Shore. From the very beginning of the Kentucky settlements the immigrants had brought in horses over the Wilderness Road. As early as '75 a race-track was laid out at Shallow Ford, and a man trying out an animal there was killed by an Indian hiding in a cane-brake.

NONE of the Indians fired on us, however, and we saw no signs of them once we drew off toward the other side. When we came to the bend where Emery and I had been taken prisoners I looked for the flat; but it had been destroyed, or else the high water had swept it away. The Salem man did not recognize the spot and I was careful not to point it out to him.

The girl grew more pensive and more inclined to remain by herself as we floated toward the Licking, across from which was our first stopping-place, Losantiville. I endeavored to draw her from her moody silence, but soon understood that she wished to be alone.

We anchored in mid-stream that first night on the river, only to find that high water made our cable useless. Rather than risk laying up at either bank we went with the current and depended upon luck. But at that the Ohio, with its firm banks, was always safe for night navigation compared with the Mississippi and some of the far Western waters.

The morning found us booming along at a good clip.

"Well, we'll soon be there," I cheerfully greeted the girl as she emerged from the cabin, sober and listless. "Have you any friends there?"

"No friends," she wearily answered. "I have no relations nor friends anywhere."

Making this forlorn confession, she quickly turned her head, and I knew she did so to hide her tears.

"You don't need no friends s'long as you've got me to adopt you as my darter," bellowed Emery, his red face looking very ferocious as he essayed to cover up his own emotion.

"And as for relations, you're forgetting I'm your big brother," I added.

The face she turned on us was splashed with tears, yet radiant—sunshine through a May shower; and her voice had more music than birds in mating-time as she softly said:

"You're both mighty good to me. Josiah Emery, all I've ever said about New England folks being stiff and cold I take back. But you'll have trouble enough without having me for your daughter. And you, Maxwell Broad, would most likely find me a nuisance as a little sister."

The last was true enough, for I would needs have to watch myself mighty sharp so as not to forget my rôle of "brother." Before I could reply Emery was fuming: "A trouble and a nuisance? Show me the man who denies you'd be a blessing to any one an' I'll cut his head off."

"Of course some arrangements must be made," I cut in. "You can't drift round in this country with no protectors—and dressed as you are."

Perhaps the last lacked tact, yet I meant well; and there was no need for her eyes to blaze like a catamount's.

"I'm sorry you don't like the way I look," she quietly replied, which was entirely what I had not said; for I liked the way she looked in her befringed tunic and trousers; I liked it immensely. Before I could explain she went on:

"I'm used to shifting for myself. I've been alone for weeks when my father was away."

"Leaving you unprotected!"

"No one needs protection when alone. I stayed on Three Islands two weeks. That was when I paddled to Upper Island—and saw you—and told you I could look out for myself."

"That isn't living. We'll think up some plan when we reach the settlement. You can always go to Pittsburg and live with my people."

She smiled grimly, then softly said:

"You mean well. You've been good to me. But your folks might not care for a wild thing from the woods coming in on them and bringing a talk that their son said

I was to live with them. They might refuse my belts. And if you have sisters——"

She paused and eyed me keenly. My rise in color had told her that I did have sisters and that I inwardly feared for the reception they would give her.

"And I've heard tell," she rapidly ran on, "that Pittsburg is a right smart sort of a place. Folks there probably ain't used to seeing girls dressed like me."

She glanced despondently down her slight form at the fringed trousers, and frowned at the smallest moccasin ever on the Ohio.

I recovered my balance and loudly scoffed at her notions. To her my words were but a noise. My flushed face had been eloquent. And yet the child could not be left to fight her battles alone.

For a minute I was decided to turn about and take her to Pittsburg, convinced I could make the girls behave until they became acquainted with her. The last accomplished, they were sure to love her.

Then my years on the river trooped by in review—years spent in striving with many other young men in protecting life and making the river safe for travel. After a decade of such work it would be impossible to ignore orders, even for Nancy Summers.

MY FLOUNDERING about in efforts to convince her that her welcome would be genuine in any Pittsburg home was interrupted by a lusty hail from behind us. Looking back, I saw a twenty-four-foot dugout decked over with canvas for a quarter of its length to keep out the weather. In the stern was an iron kettle filled with charred wood, over which cooking could be done when the navigator did not care, or dare, to land.

The latter was a tall, thin, loosely jointed individual whom I recognized as "Peg" Humphry, an excellent type of the new profession the river had created—the Western boatman. Dark as an Indian, sinewy as a panther, his long nose, drooping mouth and pale blue eyes gave the impression of inertia, which the brave appearance of the red flannel shirt and loose blue jerkin could not quite dissipate. His fur cap and moccasins, hunting-knife and tobacco-pouch were reminiscent of his former state, that of a woodsman.

" 'Low ye'll be bein' Broad from Harmar," he grinned, showing all his yellow teeth.

"Glad to see you, Peg Humphry. Hitch and come aboard."

" 'Low I can't. Makin' Louisville to take some o' the army *bateaux* an' flats through the rapids. Had a most ornery time all th' way down. Howd'do, Miss Summers."

"You know Humphry?" I asked the girl.

"We all know Peg," she said. "So you're bound for Louisville?"

" 'Low so, miss. But this cantankerous river makes a trip by schedool harder'n climbin' a peeled saplin' heels uppards."

With this characteristic figure of speech he grinned vacuously at the girl.

"Then you've got a passenger," she quickly informed him.

He gaped, doubting his big ears, and she sharply insisted—

"I'm going with you to Louisville."

"Lawd's marcy! Wal, start yer trotters if ye mean it. If we git any more water on top o' this we'll find ——'s a-snortin'."

Recovering my power of speech, I began to expostulate and to insist that she continue on to Losantiville with Emery and me.

"Yas, I 'low ye'd better go with Broad," urged Humphry.

"How will it help me any to go to Losantiville?" she demanded. "What will I do when I get there? Find a home with some family? There's only a few families there. In Louisville there's many."

"Keep on with us. It'll give us time to talk things over," I urged.

"Yas, I 'low ye'd better stick to the flat. This dugout's swift, but so narrer ye have to land afore ye can look over yer shoulder," added Humphry.

Ignoring him, she said to me:

"This is for me to settle. We've talked it over and we get nowhere. I can't expect you folks to tote my pack. I'll get on somehow. I know Peg. He'll put me through to Louisville all right."

"Safer'n a pig atop of a hundred-foot ellum with nothin' to be skeered of worser'n a blind cow," was his exaggerated assurance.

"So I must be going with him, Mr. Broad," she humbly continued, slowly making to go over the side into the dugout.

"But wait a minute," I helplessly cried, my thoughts in chaos at our unexpected parting. "Wait a minute, please."

" 'Low she'll have to start her trotters if she goes along o' me," mildly protested Humphry. "Them army fellers is all het up for me to come an' handle their boats. I sha'n't quit the current till I bury the nose o' this hyar dugout ten feet deep in Louisville mud."

She threw one leg over the side, then hesitated and I was inspired to say:

"I have important information to send Governor St. Clair. There's a man in Louisville who will get it through. Will you take my talk?"

"But you can send it from Losantiville or Fort Finney," she reminded.

"And I shall; but it must go through, and three messengers are better than one."

"Who's to have it?"

"Michael Lacassagne."

"I can't carry your talk. I don't know him and I don't want to."

She spoke almost angrily, and colored deeply.

"Good Heavens, Miss Nancy! If he doesn't get my talk the ax will be busy all along the river. His messenger is sure to get through. Any two sent up the Indian Shore may not make it. As for not liking him, why not? He's a good man."

"Good men are sometimes a bother," she muttered.

Then most graciously, for she could change with the quickness of an April sky, she agreed—

"I'll take your talk."

I secured a burnt stick from Peg's kettle, descended to the cabin and from a box of fuel obtained a strip of bark. On this I wrote:

> Bluejacket sends black belts to the Far Nations to wage a general war. Do something for bearer, whose father was recently killed by Mingoes. She is alone with neither relatives nor friends. Keep her in Louisville if you can. Get the war news to St. Clair. The bearer will tell you how I got my information.—Maxwell Broad.

Rolling this compactly, I tied it with some sinews, and had just finished making it secure when the girl stood before me.

"Is your talk ready?" she asked in a strained voice.

"It is ready."

And I placed it in a hand that trembled a little, and I wondered why she had not waited for me to give it to her on deck; and in my wonder I found a new quality of happiness.

"I'll say good-by down here," she whispered. "You've been mighty good to me, Mr. Broad—and we sha'n't meet again."

And before I could collect my wits she was on tiptoe and had pulled my head down and kissed me and was out of the cabin. My stupidity lasted but a moment. Then a surge of wonderful desire sent me on deck, caring nothing as to who should witness our parting.

But as I reached the deck she dropped lightly into the dugout and pushed it clear. As I ran to the side of the flat Peg and his passenger were two rods away and traveling rapidly.

"Come back! Come back!" I pleaded. "I've forgotten something most important."

She waved her hand in farewell, then seized a paddle and gave Peg his orders. With a helpless grin at me the boatman dipped his own paddle, and the long canoe moved several feet to our one. I'm afraid I raved at Emery in an absurd effort to make the flat overtake them.

"Head feel bad?" he sympathetically asked.

This brought me to my senses. I groaned:

"Yes. But most of my trouble comes from being a born fool."

"If you're born that way you ain't to blame. Don't you fret none. I'd 'a' said you was real bright," he soothed.

I knew now what it was to miss a presence. Instead of a thing of life the boat became depressingly drab and unlovely. The flaming walls along the shores lacked completeness now that her slim figure no longer held the forward deck.

It had required a keg of powder to demolish the trader's cabin. One fluttering kiss had annihilated the routine of my life.

"It'll be dark before we make the settlement," remarked Emery.

The sun would not set for an hour, yet I found it very dark.

CHAPTER VIII

WE MEET AN ACQUAINTANCE

LOSANTIVILLE was a collection of cabins made of sixteen-foot logs, arranged haphazardly in a rough clearing and yet grouped close enough together to afford common protection in case of an Indian attack. Emery and I tied up to the bank in the evening, and I went ashore to learn the news ever filtering through settlements and to buy some salt.

I at once learned that there was no salt for sale; in fact, scarcely any in the settlement. I did manage to procure a little honey, which the settlers used for sweetening.

One man stormed noisily up to the cabin where I was talking with several of the settlers, threw an Indian's head down where the torchlight would shine on it, and loudly announced that he must be paid a bounty.

"It's worth as much as a wolf's scalp anyway," he persisted.

Then he picked up his trophy and made for the fort. But whether he collected the six dollars, the bounty then paid for a wolf's scalp, I do not know; for I had no intention of visiting Fort Washington, where I would be recognized possibly, and my true identity established for some pirate spy to learn.

Another man, fresh from Marietta, told me that the New Englanders of that settlement, under General Rufus Putnam, were building big sea-going boats for the Caribbean trade. He declared that they would shortly be launching schooners of three hundred tons burden.

This piece of news was rather difficult to credit, although I knew that the New Englanders were master boat-builders. Even if true I could scarcely understand how they were to get their craft to the Gulf now that Spain stood astraddle of the Mississippi. But within a very few years I was to behold all that the man said surpassed by those Northern builders.

From another I learned the Indians were active around Kaskaskia and were also making kills along the Wabash.

Being chiefly concerned with the work of the river-pirates, I turned the conversation and was told that several boats had been held up and partly burned down the river, and that the signs pointed to Indian work, but that men from Kentucky believed that the pirates were the culprits, and that an armed force would be sent to exterminate them as soon as the Indians were forced to live up to the terms of their last treaty. But question as I would I could find no one who had any definite ideas about the gang's headquarters. Indians, not white murderers, were what the settlers feared.

Remembering Lacassagne's advice to watch my back trail, I made careful inquiries as to all newcomers at Losantiville and learned that only two men had recently arrived ahead of me. One of these was from Louisville and was well known to several of the settlers as an honest man. The other was from Marietta, sent out by the Ohio Company. Satisfied that no one had dropped off there in search of my trail, I decided Harpe and his gang were thrown off the track when I was captured by the Indians.

The place depressed me. I had intended to stay there for a day at the least, but now I could not get away soon enough. This perhaps was owing to the absence of the girl. She was calling me down the river; and I took my honey and bits of news and returned to the flat where Emery was trying to catch fish and swearing that the tide was setting in and spoiling his luck.

We made a meal of odds and ends, and I won his hearty approval by announcing our departure for Fort Finney with the first morning light. It was not until we were ready to turn in that I remembered the message for St. Clair which I intended leaving at the fort. So once more I went ashore, routed out the man who had sold me the honey, and by the light from his fireplace wrote out my information and secured his promise to deliver it at the fort with the first light.

I could not avoid the men at Fort Finney as I had those at Washington, for there was no settlement at the former place. However, none of the officers had served with me, and as I had a stubby growth of a beard I did not much fear recognition by the enlisted men. I knew Major Finney and would make my report to him.

All this might give the impression that to be recognized by army men would spell ruin to my plans. No such risk was at stake. I planned to avoid acquaintances so that a careless mention of my name and rank might not be learned by some spy for the river gang, and my description precede me, when I ventured among the enemy.

Fort Finney was a mile above the mouth of the Great Miami. I was present in the Fall of '85 when the first boats were unloaded and all hands were turned out to cut timber for the blockhouse and pickets for the stockade.

It was in shape a square with stout two-story houses for bastions. The curtains were a hundred feet in length, the pickets being set four feet in the ground and extending nine feet above.

Outside the fort but under its guns was the council-house, measuring twenty by sixty feet. It was to this structure that the Indians came to drink rum and sign treaties while their relatives and friends were off a-scalping. It was here also that the younger warriors stripped and painted and did their dances for the officers.

The fort was convenient for the Indians living on the headwaters of the Miami, and being located between the Falls and Limestone, it was rather a key position for all the river defenses.

We made the run down-river in a gray, cold morning with the rain falling in sheets by the time we were fairly under way, and the wind beating the river to a foam. We held well inshore despite the danger of driving into the bushes or on to a nest of snags.

We had no fear of Indians or pirates; but the inconvenience of keeping close enough to the bank so as not to run by the Miami in the blinding squall was more trying than decent sailing with every prospect of a fight.

There were many willows along the water's edge, and back of these rose the maples and ash, then a third terrace thickly timbered with magnolias, poplars, and beeches. The rain blurred out what otherwise would have been a beautiful spectacle, and we were constantly driving full tilt inshore and then desperately clawing off. When we struck the mouth of the Miami it was with a heavy rise at our stern, and it was with the utmost difficulty we got out of the main river and into an eddy where we managed to take a line ashore.

On reaching the fort I repaired to Major Finney's headquarters, recalled myself to his recollection and told him what I had learned while a prisoner at Bluejacket's camp. In turn he informed me that there were several hundred Indians camping two miles below the fort, and that they were almost entirely Wyandots and Delawares.

He was frank to say that the absence of the Shawnees worried him; and he agreed that some of the Shawnees, especially those living north of Old Chillicothe, were ripe for mischief. He was not willing to admit, however, that Bluejacket's ambition was beyond leading a raiding-party against some settlement. He admitted that the Wyandots might join in a war-path, but he scouted the idea of the Far Nations being involved in a general war. Live and learn is an excellent motto, but those who are killed in the middle of the lesson profit nothing by their dearly bought knowledge.

He asked me whether I cared to scout up the river for new signs, and as I was detailed for an entirely different phase of work I was compelled to decline. I had started my "black-belt" report to Governor St. Clair by three different routes, and this relieved me of any responsibility in that line.

In refusing to act as scout it was necessary for me to tell him my real errand; and I requested him to hold my communications in the strictest confidence. He assured me he would do so, but I could see that he thought but lightly of my business, and was inclined to sneer at the idea of an officer bothering with such low truck. When I mentioned that Michael Lacassagne was vitally interested in my quest he viewed it with less scorn, for Lacassagne was a powerful factor all along the river.

CAPTAIN O'HARA, a contractor, had arrived the day before with a big assortment of Indian goods, also stores for the fort. He also had brought the pay-roll for the preceding year and several months' cash for the current year. Naturally he was the most popular man with the soldiers, and as soon as Major Finney had paid them off the men were given permission to buy liquor and goods.

The captain had opened shop, and what with drinking and the buying of goods there was no room for any other business. The trading was still on when I left my conference with the major; and for the next forty-eight hours there was to be scarcely a sober man in the garrison, while the captain was assured of taking back with him all the money he had brought down-river with the exception of the officers' pay.

Major Finney informed me that within three hours after the first bung was opened it was difficult to find six men fit to stand guard duty. During the second day of my stay and the third day of the drinking we received word that a small settlement a few miles below and on the Kentucky side had been wiped out.

On the next day five Shawnees came in, bringing tobacco from their chief for the officers to smoke as a guarantee that he would not be killed did he come in. The messengers were uneasy and kept close together while waiting to see whether the delegation was to have safe conduct or was to be exterminated because of the killing down-river.

Major Finney stopped the liquor trade and ordered the men to sober up. Then tobacco was sent back by the messengers, and the fort and council-house put in order to receive the chief and his leading men.

Until now the soldiers had not noticed either Emery or me, but with the fumes of the liquor cleared from their brains they began to give attention to my companion and his remarkable sword. I had been at headquarters talking with Major Finney and came out to find Emery when I beheld a commotion in the middle of the parade ground. A mob of soldiers was pressing about Emery, badgering him, while he fought desperately to check his anger.

I began working my way toward him; but before I could reach him a man violently pushed his hat over his eyes. With a bellow of rage Emery struck out blindly with the hand grasping the hilt of the sword, and by luck rather than by skill caught a man on the side of the head and knocked him senseless.

I supposed he had brained the fellow. So did the soldiers, for they remained motionless, staring blankly at the prostrate figure. The slight lull gave Emery time to work himself clear of the mob.

Then a man yelled: "He's killed Bob! The low-down hound."

With that he snatched up a woodsman's ax, and, swinging it about his head, rushed at Emery.

Before any one could interfere they were at it, Emery now sweeping his sword around in wide circles and the man with the ax trying to get inside.

"Throw it! Throw it at him!" howled one of the spectators.

"I'll chop him in two!" yelled the axman.

The soldier believed he had his chance. He leaped in and raised the ax for a downward stroke. But Emery, as light as a cat, leaped back at the same moment and his long blade struck the ax-handle close to the man's knuckles and sheared it in two as if it had been made of cheese.

The fellow remained staring at the piece still clutched in his hand, and had Emery so desired he could have hewn him limb by limb. Instead he rested the point of his sword on the ground and waited developments.

The man he had knocked down came to his feet, rubbing his head and glaring about him wildly. The fellow holding the fragment of the handle suddenly dropped it as if it had been a brand of fire, and with a howl of terror jumped back among his companions.

I reached Emery's side and proclaimed that the long sword had slain more Indians than had fallen at the hands of any five men in the fort. As I finished Major Finney came up and sent them to their quarters with stern threats if they misbehaved again.

Emery spoke scarcely a word about the affair, his mind dwelling incessantly on the fort rations of bread, beef, and whisky. From my experience at soldiering I knew that this was a disgusting diet, but for one who had been living from hand to mouth and without any salt it was most satisfying. I kept with Emery that day, although the soldiers evinced no further desire to trouble him; in fact, they displayed a flattering interest in his weapon and proved themselves to be good fellows.

On the following day word was brought in by a Delaware runner that twoscore Shawnees were coming and that Bluejacket was leading them. This information induced Major Finney to smile and remind me of my blood-curdling suspicions.

I energetically replied that Bluejacket's coming was all a piece of his scheme to pave the way for a general war. He feared that my escape had resulted in my getting word to the fort about the black belts, and he was risking his life to make the garrison believe I had exaggerated. I expressed a desire to keep under cover and take the chief by surprize.

Major Finney was indifferent whether I hid or met the chief at the outset. It was plain that he completely discounted my sensational news.

While it would have been easy for me to keep out of Bluejacket's way had I been alone it proved to be impossible to conceal Emery's presence. While intending to abet my plan the fellow had to be in the edge of the clearing near the council-house when my late captor broke from the woods at the head of his men. Seeing Emery, the visitors took it for granted that I was near; so I openly made for the council-house.

TOBACCO was being smoked when I entered, the Indians occupying one end of the long room, Major Finney and his officers grouped at the other. And the red men knew that the guns of the fort were trained upon them.

After the preliminaries had been observed—and during these Bluejacket gave no sign of recognizing Emery or me—the chief stood up and sorrowfully informed Major Finney that his men were "foolish children."

"Bad Indians have told them that the peace treaty of the Cohonk moon (Winter) not only gave their lands to the Thirteen Fires but also gave the Indians to be held as slaves," he gravely explained. "I have talked with them, and in a little time I can lead them back to the sunshine."

Major Finney curtly denied any desire to enslave the Indians, and stated that the Shawnees by throwing in their fortunes with the white opponents of the Thirteen Fires in the late war had lost all title to their lands; that the Thirteen Fires in taking over the American lands formerly held by the Big Chief across the big water also had taken over the Ohio lands held by England's red allies.

"I have smoked your tobacco," he said in concluding his remarks. "I want the Shawnees to stay in the sunlight. But if we can learn who took the scalps down the river on the Kentucky shore we shall take those men and shoot them."

"We have heard of that killing," said Bluejacket, "and we know it was not the work of the Shawnees. We should not be made to carry the packs of another nation. Ever since the Thirteen Fires made their first peace treaty with the Indians (with the Delawares in 1778) the Shawnees have kept a strong hold on the chain of friendship, but the Mingoes have acted like wolves chasing deer."

Thus indirectly did the chief place on the Mingoes the blame of the Kentucky massacre; and from his point of view it was an astute move. If the whites could be enraged against the Mingoes those fierce warriors would be forced to join the Shawnees in warring on the settlements.

"The Shawnees have taken too many scalps since the Thirteen Fires were lighted to talk like that," warned Major Finney.

"Our young men have lost their wits at times and have stuck the ax into white heads because many Shawnees have been killed by the whites," countered Bluejacket. "No white chief was ever killed while visiting a Shawnee village."

The last referred to Cornstalk's brutal death; and there was no dodging the fact that Bluejacket had counted coup.

Major Finney caught my eye, smiled grimly and replied—

"Even now there is a white man here who says that you tried to torture him and that the Grenadier Squaw saved his life."

"No woman can save the life of a man I am torturing," quickly declared Bluejacket. "The young man was foolish. He was afraid. He had a friend, the white buffalo who carried a medicine knife as tall as a man. The Shawnees would adopt the white buffalo and wash his blood until it was all red. To make the buffalo brave and strong enough to watch a man die without turning his head we tied the other man up and made a play of burning him.

"The Grenadier Squaw was told to come and claim him as her brother. It was a part of our ceremony of washing out the white blood. We believed the white man understood he was not to be hurt, but his heart was filled with water, and after he was taken from the stake he ran away, his friend going with him."

Regardless of council etiquette I leaped to my feet and cried: "That's a lie, Bluejacket. The stake and the burning brush was no game. The Grenadier Squaw saved me from being roasted. Only the coming of Buckongahelas gave me and my friend a chance to escape."

Bluejacket's small eyes flickered murderously under my accusation, but he maintained his composure most superbly and sneered:

"Little birds have sung evil songs for my white brother to hear and be afraid of. He sees his shadow and thinks it is a ghost. He was in no danger in my camp."

"Have the black belts gone to the Far Nations yet?" I demanded.

"Black belts have been sent to make a war on the Cherokee, who have crossed the Ohio and stolen our horses," he haughtily replied.

Turning to Finney, I earnestly declared—

"Even now he is waiting for the sticks to be brought in so he can learn how many of the Far Indians will join him in his war."

The Indians were growing angry and were hitching about uneasily. Bluejacket remained standing, outwardly composed, but even a novice could suspect he was in a beastly temper. The white man's way of give-and-take, of making accusations point-blank and ignoring the powwow and palaver so dear to the red heart, was most obnoxious. Bluejacket did not so much mind my calling him a liar as he did my style of taking short cuts in my talk.

Major Finney sensed this, and as nothing was to be gained by this procedure he interrupted me by rising and saying:

"Bluejacket is our friend. We eat out of one dish. Our young men can not always be controlled. They dream of war, and wake up and say our friends, the Shawnees, are on the path. We will smoke the Great White Father's peace tobacco and take hold of the chain of friendship with both hands.

"If there are stones and briers in the road leading from our river forts to the village of the Shawnees we will exchange more belts until they are cleared away and the path made smooth. Now let Bluejacket's young men paint and do their dance and we will all have something to make our hearts warm."

Emery asked me what he was saying. After I had interpreted it under my breath the good fellow leaped to his feet and lifted his sword and began bellowing:

"These men are bloody murderers! Are you soldiers foolish enough to let them fool you with glib talk?"

I yanked him to a sitting posture. Major Finney, his face hot with anger, warned him:

"Another yelp out of you, and you'll go into irons. Most of our Indian troubles are caused by the likes of you land-grabbers coming out here and hogging everything in sight."

Emery would not have taken this in silence—not from Governor St. Clair himself; but I clapped my hand over his mouth and managed to keep him quiet until I could make him listen to reason. Even then I succeeded only by telling him that Major Finney was playing a deep game on the savages and that he was spoiling it by his wild outbursts. Bluejacket, unable to follow the major's rapid words and the Salem man's frantic accusation, beheld me smothering further speech from Emery's lips and knew the soldier and the civilian were at odds. His eyes glittered malignantly.

Waiting politely until sure that my friend had nothing more to say, the chief with much dignity laid before Finney a double string of white wampum, explaining that it was the symbol of the pure friendship existing between the Shawnees and the Thirteen Fires, a string for each race, the two strings bound together at the ends and middle.

FINNEY accepted the wampum with the usual speech, and this terminated the ceremony. Bluejacket had braved death to learn where he stood with the white men, and had played his part well.

While soldiers were off to bring rum I walked over to Bluejacket, who moved from his robe and insisted that I sit upon it while we opened our bags of talk. To give up his robe and sit on the floor was the acme of courtesy. So it all terminated that I sat cross-legged before my would-be slayer and exchanged tobacco, smoking his weak kinnikkinnick which I detested because of its liberal adulteration of ground dogwood, while he puffed my brand, which he disliked as being too strong. He lighted my pipe, and, not to be outdone in politeness, I lighted his. After we had puffed the smoke to the earth and sky and the four wind gods he said—

"The Shawnees want the white buffalo to come back to them."

"So you can make his skin into belts and quivers?" I asked.

"To wash the white blood from him and make his medicine knife fight for the Shawnees when we go to war with the Cherokee."

"His medicine knife will fall to the ground and break in pieces if he asks it to fight against the whites," I warned.

"It can be washed red, like his blood. We want it to fight against the Cherokee. He ran away because his white brother made him."

"If I lead him back what will the Shawnees do with me?"

"We will hold a council," he evasively replied.

"Do you know a white man called Summers?" I abruptly asked.

His expressionless visage registered a flicker of emotion. His voice was indifferent as he answered:

"The Shawnees have heard of him. They say he found lead in a hole in the ground."

"They say he dug a hole and found lead," I corrected.

"The Indians dug the hole many moons ago."

"What will you do with him if he comes to you?"

"Melt lead for him," was the quiet reply.

"He is dead," I informed Bluejacket. "Many Mingoes and a few Shawnees went to death before he died."

By the sudden lighting of his eyes I knew that this was news to him. Then I told him of the fight, but did not mention the locality of the cabin.

"It is bad to hear that he is a ghost without passing through our hands," Bluejacket regretted. "He came to us as a trader. The Shawnees trusted him. He camped with us by a hole where we find lead. They say he took lead to the river and showed it to white men and was to bring them back to take all the lead. We wanted to talk with him about it. Where is the girl?"

"Gone far up the river to the white villages," I promptly lied.

He smoked thoughtfully, then said:

"It is good for her to keep out of our country. My young men are very angry at what her father did."

"Did the Shawnees ever trade gold and glass to him? Gold and glass they had taken from white people?"

He shook his head; and I believed him.

"Do the Shawnees know if he ever lived with the white men who steal boats on the river?"

He appeared not to hear me and continued staring over my head. I laid down his pipe and received mine and rose, saying:

"I am hunting bad white men, not Indians. I fight Indians only to save my life."

He rose to his feet, and volunteered:

"They say there is a man with a white skin and a black heart. Two fingers are chopped off his hand—so."

And he rested his knife-blade across the second joints of the two middle fingers on his left hand. I waited patiently, and after a long pause he added—

"They say the trader called Summers was with him many times on the river."

"What is that man's name?" I eagerly asked. "I want his head."

He leisurely gathered up his blanket and threw it over his shoulders and turned to join his warriors; then shot back at me—

"Cave-in-Rock."

It was startling to find this fierce aborigine possessing the knowledge I had but recently acquired. I stared after him in silence for a few moments. He was a big man even if red.

I walked toward Emery, who was near the door, and fell to wondering whether the Shawnees might not have kept the peace and aided us in exterminating the river gang if Cornstalk had not been murdered.

Emery carried his sword over his shoulder, the one object of interest to the Indians as he stared belligerently at every soldier as if challenging comment on the curious weapon. Since his quarrel with the axman, however, there was none looking for trouble.

Major Finney finished giving directions as to the rum rations and beckoned me to join him. He was watching the warriors strip and paint for their dance, and without removing his gaze from them he said to me:

"I have no authority over you, Ensign Broad. I will help you all I can, as that is my duty. But this friend of yours, the land-grabber, can not draw rations here any longer. He showed his true color today. He must leave the fort before sundown. He can have six days' rations.

"—— their kidney! A few more of them and all the reds between the Miami and the Pacific Ocean will be bringing black belts to the Ohio."

"We leave this day," I informed the major. "The man is my companion by accident. He is my friend from choice."

He bowed stiffly and crossed to the Indians. I went to Emery and without telling him what Finney had said asked—

"How would you like to start down the river for Louisville now?"

"Glad to. I don't like this place. These soldiers need to be disciplined. Guess some of our Massachusetts veterans of the French-Indian War could git 'em into shape mighty quick."

I hurried him from the council-house, fearing that his remarks might be overheard and resented. He was no man to take into a garrison, especially when the men were recovering from a drinking-bout. Fortunately almost all the soldiers were at the council-house, so Emery got us into no trouble while I was procuring two packs.

We took our packs and walked down the river to the flatboat. Emery was overjoyed to get aboard, and without losing any time we entered upon the river. The current was full and carried much driftwood, but I could see that the rise had passed its high-water mark and was gradually receding.

"I'll land you in Louisville in no time," I encouraged him.

"You stopping there?"

"I shall go on; probably as far as Old Shawneetown."

"I guess I don't like any name with Shawnee in it; but if you go there, then that's where I go."

"Nonsense. You must stop roaming around. Nancy Summers is at Louisville. You must look after her."

"If the place is safe for me it's safe for her. Time enough to look after her when we git back from this Shawneetown."

"But I refuse to take you with me," I coldly informed him.

He stared blankly; then his wide mouth opened in a terrific grin.

"Do tell!" he grunted.

* * *

IT WAS in such a fashion that the man I had helped to escape from death became my captor in the sense that I could not shake him off or get rid of him by abuse. God knows there was a time ahead of me when I was to need him sorely!

Only once more did I revert to the question of his going the whole distance with me. It was near night and we were making ready to anchor. I had barely introduced the subject when he cut me short by sternly saying:

"Hark ye, lad. I have business down the river. There is a man with two fingers missing. I have said I would do certain things to him for the bloody work he did on Joel Camp's boat. The Emerys always keep their word or bust in the trying."

We had thrown out our iron a quarter of a mile below a small island. As we were preparing our evening meal six boats, lashed three abreast and hitched together as a unit, turned the island and bore down upon us. All the people seemed to be grouped on the decks of the two middle boats excepting the men at the sweeps.

I could not see that any guard was set, which was entirely contrary to river rule. The outside boats should have been manned, the women and children keeping to the middle ones.

On came the huge mass amid a chorus of singing and squeaking of fiddles, and the *moo*-ing of cows. Thus far they had run the gantlet of disease, accident, Indians and pirates. They were as happy and carefree as children, although death might be awaiting them just below the first bend.

The sound of their gaiety affected Emery strongly. Tears trickled down his stern face, and I knew he was thinking of his lost friends and their last day of happiness.

I hailed them through my hands and asked them if they would not pass the night with us. A man hoarsely shouted a reply I could not catch, but his outstretched hand pointing down-stream told me they were eager to press on. They passed us quite a distance out, waving farewells. Then the wind brought to us the voices of the women shrilly singing for our benefit:

Adieu, my friends; come on, my dears.
This journey we'll forego,
And settle Licking Creek
On yonder O-hi-o.

"Something tells me they're running into trouble," cried Emery, pulling at the cable. "We must drop down after them. The poor fools! I'll wager they don't even know they've passed the Licking. Not that they planned to go there perhaps. And to think I was like 'em in ignorance! But that was ages an' ages ago."

"They're in no danger tonight," I assured him, reluctant to travel farther in the failing light and with the river choked with driftwood. "We can pick them up tomorrow."

"No, no," mumbled Emery, working more desperately to haul up the anchor. "I feel it in my bones, I tell you. I was brought up by the salt water. I can sometimes tell when things is to happen. I see them sailing into a welter of blood."

And he straightened and pointed to the west, where the low sun showed a strip of red through a slot in the gray clouds.

"It's a sign, I'm telling you," he added.

There was a contagion in his fear, due more to the uncanny spell of the river in that Autumn twilight than to any well-defined reason. Splashes of crimson on the banks, a streak of crimson across the turbid waters, and that slot of red in the western sky, became ill omens.

We traveled at the maximum, my knowledge permitting me to get all speed out of the boat and to keep in the current. From below the bend ahead came the sound of their voices, still singing. Unreal voices in an unreal world.

CHAPTER IX

THE CRIPPLED HAND

THEY had anchored in an eddy close to the Indian Shore, and the first figure I made out was that of a boy perched on the stern of the second middle boat trying to catch fish. From a window was thrust the head of a cow. Smoke rose forward, and a babble of voices as the womenfolks became busy with their cooking. As we drew nearer we could see the men loafing and smoking and doubtless absorbed with recounting the adventures of the day.

When near enough to catch bits of their conversation I realized that it was the old story of grown-ups playing the child's game of searching for the foot of the rainbow. From the cabin below a woman's piercing voice was warmly declaring for the Natchez country because of something she had overheard at Wheeling. And I wondered if she wore an apron with large red dots. One of the men was stoutly contending for the advantages of New Orleans, although his knowledge of that part must have been of the vaguest.

"This United States ain't got no hold on us," he argued in part. "Can the United States look after us an' keep us from gittin' kilt? If she can't help us an' we must help ourselves, why shouldn't we go where we can help ourselves the most? New 'Leans is nice an' warm. No more cuttin' through the ice 'fore you can water the cattle. No more——"

"Oh, shut up!" roared a deep bass voice. "Who wants any truck with them cusses? Who needs any help from the government? It's our place to remember we're part of the Government an' do our own helpin'. Mouth of the Cumberland's best place for us to set up in, to my notion."

Other voices joined in, then above the clamor rose the bass voice again, angrily declaring:

"Well, we can split up then. I always guessed it was poor business when a parcel of neighbors started off together. They never git along so well as if they'd all come from different parts of the country."

"There, there, Lorenzo," soothed a woman's melodious voice. "Don't you go an' git huffy. We'll have a reg'lar town meetin' on it tomorrer, an' whatever we vote to do, we'll stick to it an' do it."

Some one broke out in song, singing another verse from "Pleasant Ohio," and all acrimony seemed to be forgotten. By this time the boy with the fish-line had finished studying us and went scampering over the deck to bawl out:

"Hi, folkses! Boat jes' above us. 'Pears like the one we passed up-stream."

The men sprang to their feet, and there was an exodus of women and children from the cabin. A short, stout figure of a man came aft and bellowed at us—

"What ye want?"

"Nothing," I answered.

"'Pear to be follerin' us quite close," was the suspicious comment.

He was the one who preferred the Cumberland country.

"I'm from Fort Harmar," I said.

"Where's that?" I told him; and he said—

"Queer I never heard of it 'fore."

His voice was growing truculent.

"My friend here is fresh from New England," I added.

"Huh! Is that so?"

The tone indicated that the speaker's suspicions were still lively.

Emery shouted—

"Any one of you ever hear tell of Josiah Emery, of Salem, Massachusetts?"

There was a silence, and Emery continued—

"Well, that's me."

"Salem!" exclaimed a woman. "Lan' sakes! Guess we do know Salem! None of us come from there, but it's just like home to hear it spoken of down here."

"You oughter know by my voice I'm from New England," said Emery peevishly.

"Have to be mighty careful," said the first speaker, whom the woman had called Lorenzo.

"Then you should anchor farther out and have guards posted," I shortly informed him. "We left good anchorage to follow and see you didn't make a mess of it."

There was a pause, then the man exploded:

"Say, who'n —— be you? Seemed to be mighty keen to have us stop up-stream with you. Now you want to git us into the channel where the current'll raise hob with us. Mister, we don't like it. Will you kindly drop down-stream, or shall we?"

"You idiots! I'm a friend," I retorted, incensed at their stubbornness and ignorance.

Before my uncivil rebuke could occasion trouble Emery loudly volunteered:

"Lemme come aboard alone. I'll be hostage: I'll soon make you understand I'm honest New England folks. My friend's what he says. I'll stay all night with you. If there's any signs of cutting-up you can take it out of my hide. We follered you because you don't seem to know how to look after yourselves."

The men talked among themselves in low voices; then the spokesman agreed:

"You can come aboard. If anything happens we don't like you'll git to —— out of here, an' that ain't meant for swearin', neither. If everything's all hunky we'll 'pologize."

We had no tender, but the fleet possessed two skiffs, and the boy was sent in one of these for Emery and his long sword. There was a fresh outburst of amazement and suspicion when the travelers saw the sword. Finally, however, they allowed him to tell his story.

The darkness now all but blurred them from view, but I caught every word of his sorry recital, the quavers in his voice, and even his deep sobs as he passed the climax. After he had finished there was a volley of low exclamations, and the leader said:

"Rings true, every word of it! You're New England born 'n' bred, all right. No New Englander could be one of them bloody devils. Glad to have your friend come aboard if he wants to. We got chicken 'n' pick'rel for supper. He can fetch his boat alongside an' we'll make a picnic of it."

The women eagerly joined in the invitation, and as I thought it best to leave our flat where she was anchored the boy was sent to ferry me aboard. Our position did not suit me—not for the fleet nor our boat. For although mine was not so close inshore I would have felt easier if all the flats had been in midstream. When I explained this they refused to take me seriously.

"My name's Lorenzo Hooker, sir," cried the leader of the band. "Think any derned pirate can git the best of us, now that we're on our guard? We ain't so close to the bank but what they've got to come to us by boat. They could do that if we was in the middle of the river.

"We've got muskets 'n' know how to use 'em. We'll stand guard. Almost wish some of the critters would show a head! I'd l'arn 'em how we folks use buckshot."

"Tried buckshot an' found it satisfyin' in the French-Injun War," piped up an elderly man.

SO I surrendered, being quite helpless to do otherwise, sat down to a most excellent meal and enjoyed myself immensely. They were anxious for me to join company with them as far as I should go, but it did not suit my purpose to become identified with any travelers.

I told them I journeyed on official business and must travel fast. Just what my business was I neglected to state.

I took occasion to urge them to put into Louisville and to have a talk with Michael Lacassagne, the merchant; for I knew he would impress upon them the real dangers of the river. Somewhat reluctantly they agreed to do this, although there were those who lamented the loss of time. Not knowing their final destination, and with scarcely more than two agreeing upon any plan, they were in a sweat to be on their way.

Yet these were not simple-minded folks. They typed all the excellent qualities that characterized the average New Englander. We of the South sometimes had scant respect for their virtues—perhaps because the many years of coastwise shipping between the two sections had taught us their powers in bargaining.

But in this new environment they were as children. Put them back among their granite hills and grim Winters and they would be shrewd enough, I'll wager.

Finding writing-material in the cabin, I drew up a letter for Lacassagne, explaining their ignorance of the river and urging him to influence them to some sane course of action.

Completing the letter, I gave it to Hooker, who reminded me much of Emery. And yet they were entirely different. The same clime and rugged life had nurtured them, and outwardly they were of the same type.

Hooker was the shrewder man of the two. He was from Connecticut and had wanted to stop at Marietta because of the Connecticut Putnam being at the head of that colony. His desire might have prevailed, but the sight of the little settlement had disgruntled his companions. It was neither betwixt nor between, as one woman told me. If they could not find room in a large settlement then they would emulate their forefathers by finding a virgin country, where the forest was untouched by the ax, and where they could hew out their own homes.

In the words of the old man with the piping voice—

"Marietty wasn't much of nothin', but what few was there was desperately crowded."

They also had learned that the surveyors of that colony were being killed and scalped once they wandered a few miles from the Muskingum.

That Hooker was of excellent mental caliber was shown by his remarks concerning the advisability of immigrants from different sections of the country traveling together. I had observed the same fact. Where a band is composed of old neighbors they're bound to carry with them into a new country their old crop of jealousies. They know one another too well to make ideal traveling-mates, where all plans must result in a series of compromises. Yes, Hooker was a more capable man than Emery, and if he survived his first year on the river he would be a hard one for red or white rascal to fool.

I entrusted Lacassagne's letter to him. In accepting it, however, he frankly said that his friends would "town-meetin' " on their problems next morning, and that whatever they decided to do he would agree to.

"But," he hopefully added, "mebbe I can git 'em to pass over the article till we've stopped at Louisville. I've got enough votes right on this boat to work it, if t'other boats don't git to bunching their votes."

After supper the women bundled the few dishes into a salt-water fish-net and soused them up and down over the side of the boat. The men returned to the deck, where they lounged and smoked.

There was but little talking, and the spell of the river seemed to be upon them. The old man in a tremulous whisper confided to me that he always visualized the river as a steep hill down which were hurrying all sorts of people and all sorts of luck.

"Seems like we was half-way down," he rambled on. "But dernation! What's waitin' for us at the bottom? Do we go smooth, or do we go rough?"

"You'll go very smooth, I'm sure," I encouraged.

"Wal, I hope so," he sighed. "I've fit ever since I was ten years old. I've fit French an' English. I've always had to fight the Injuns, of course. Seems like that when a man gits to be eighty-five he oughter have a chance to lay his gun aside an' eat his victuals without keepin' his eyes on the woods."

"You have folks on these boats," I murmured.

"Folks? I ain't got any folks."

"But New England has no Indian troubles now. Why did you leave?"

"I quit just because it was gittin' too dernation tame. No 'citement, no nothin'. Nice fambly that took care of me, but they pampered me. I couldn't stand for that. In another dozen years I'd have to ask some one to feed me.

"No, siree! I was just starvin' to git out where a man has to rassle for what he gits. Judas Iscariot, but it did make me mad to have folks treat me like I was gittin' helpless."

And thus did he contradict himself and lay his trail in a circle. He bemoaned the life that had been filled with ceaseless conflict. He derided the life of peace and ease that at last came to him. Old dogs and new tricks, oil and water. Surely he was the stuff of which nations are built. I did not doubt but that he was opposed to landing at Marietta, his stout old heart yearning to go on and on, to conquer the unknown. I respected him immensely after our talk.

Emery was in his element. He was among neighbors. In their eyes he was a veteran. That he had killed Indians made him a tragic figure.

As the men smoked and pricked their ears I could hear him grumbling out bits of advice concerning the river and its perils; some of it being my advice to him and containing sense, some of it being made up offhand and being dangerous nonsense. The sword, after the first glimpse, had impressed them not at all. They had lived along the Atlantic coast and were used to curious things brought from far lands. They were inclined to scoff at it as a weapon of defense even after he checked off his killings on his fingers.

"You'd need a ten-acre field to swing the contraption in," chuckled a man.

IT WAS still early in the evening although very dark when I caught the sound of a paddle between us and the shore, and warned the guard. He gave a hail and a voice replied:

"Surveyor. Lost from my party. Can you give me somepin to eat? 'Bout starved!"

Hooker lighted a torch and stuck it in an iron socket on the side of the inshore flat, but its flickering light did not reach the stranger.

"Come ahead till we can see you," growled Hooker.

The paddling was resumed, and soon a bark canoe containing one man shot into the ring of light.

"Well," slowly commented Hooker, "we ain't afraid of one man. Come alongside an' hitch."

"Don't blame you for bein' sharp set," heartily endorsed the man as he drove his canoe nearer. "If I'd been more keerful I wouldn't 'a' been in this fix. Tramped my moccasins off'n my feet. Just 'bout starved. If I hadn't found this canoe an' heard you gabbin' I reckon I'd just laid down an' died."

I crawled to the middle boat and kept flat on the deck. For one who was starved the fellow's voice was very strong. His finding a canoe on such a night was too much of a miracle to be accepted offhand.

But most conclusive of all was the man's speech. He claimed to be a surveyor, and he talked like one of the Harpe gang. Invariably the surveyors were men from up-river and were clean-cut in their talk. They had learned their business where settlements were close together, or had grown into towns.

Still there was no danger in the one man and I was willing that he should come aboard. I would listen for the stealthy approach of his mates, and I knew they could not reach us by boat without betraying themselves to my forest-trained ears. Or I would wait for him to make some request or suggestion which would reveal their plans.

Emery's attitude would have been amusing had not the night threatened a tragedy. Although once the victim of treachery, and despite my repeated warnings against the pirates and their various games for lulling suspicions, he was now standing near the edge of the boat, his honest face beaming benevolence on what he accepted as an unfortunate fellow creature. There he stood, leaning on his sword and eager to be the first to aid the starved wanderer over the side.

"Lawd! What a time!" groaned the man in the canoe as he caught a rope and tied the bark. "Git out in the woods to do honest work an' the first thing you know you're jumped an' hounded by a parcel of Injuns! I've et nuts an' chewed bark till it seems I must have honest food or bust."

"Aboard you come! We'll soon fill you up," was Emery's hospitable greeting, and he stooped to seize the man's wrist.

Next he astounded all of us by giving a loud yell, snatching up his sword and swinging it with both hands in a horrible sweep at the stranger's head. Only the man's prompt leap into the river kept his head on his shoulders. I rushed forward, Hooker seized the Salem man and in a bellow demanded if he were crazy.

"I'm mad clear through," howled Emery, dancing wildly about the deck and watching the black water where it reflected the torchlight.

"What is it?" I asked, clapping a hand on his shoulder and holding my rifle ready with my left hand.

"The hand he stuck up for me to take!" groaned Emery, glaring at the water and snarling like a wildcat.

"What do you mean by actin' like this on our boat?" thundered Hooker.

"That hand! His left hand! Two fingers cut off at the middle j'int!" yelled Emery.

I kicked the torch overboard, hurled two women to the deck and cried for the men to lie flat. Some obeyed without stopping to reason. Others stood stupidly, as if not hearing me. Then from the water inshore rose a voice crying:

"Shoot 'em! —— 'em! Some one aboard knows me!"

A streak of fire ran along the bank. Some lead struck the boat, but most of it whistled wide. I gave orders for the women to go below and called on Hooker to have the anchors up and the fleet worked out into the stream.

Now that the surprize was over the men went to work calmly enough, nor was there any foolishness among the women. The men worked silently, and as we were near shore I easily detected the sound of paddles when the villains took to their small boats to board us.

The man who leaped into the river was now picked up by his mates; for I heard some one say:

"Here he is. Give him a hand."

I fired toward the sound of the voice and was rewarded by a yell of pain.

"Dobson, Carter 'n' Gilps, give 'em a volley. T'others wait till the first three reload," Hooker softly ordered as he helped with the anchors.

The three muskets, each carrying a heavy charge of buckshot, were discharged, and a wild outcry of pain, followed by rifle-fire, told us that some of the lead pellets had found targets. The flatboats began to move slowly as the current gripped them.

"We're ready," whispered a man.

Promptly Hooker ordered the remainder of the muskets to be fired; and for good measure some of the women below began firing through the windows.

"——! ——!" howled a voice on the bank. "Git back here afore some more of ye git hit."

I took a shot toward this voice and reloaded, then sprang to help with the sweeps. Hooker derisively taunted:

"Bit off more'n you could chaw, didn't you? If it was day-time I'd come ashore an' take a birch rod to you."

Horrible threats, howls and oaths answered him; and as fast they could load the pirates fired into the darkness in hopes of doing damage. I urged Hooker to keep silent and to order his men to be quiet, for I feared that a chance bullet might take a life.

For some distance we ran down-stream without getting far from the shore; then the current struck toward the Kentucky side, and I knew that the crisis was passed.

"They won't trouble you again tonight," I told Hooker. "It's better that you anchored out here. Night-running might tie you up on a snag where they could take their time in picking you off tomorrow. Just keep a guard posted. I'll look you up in the morning."

"Not leaving us?" he protested.

"God have mercy on us," moaned a woman who had made never a whimper while in actual danger.

"We left our boat, you know. We'll go back in the canoe that scoundrel left. We've got to have that boat. I haven't any idea the pirates know we left it.

"You'll be safe till morning. If anything should happen before we join you the sound of a gun will bring us on the jump. Emery, you sure about those fingers?"

"Guess I be!" he snorted. "An' if I hadn't vowed to cut his head off I'd 'a' had his arm."

"I see two fingers was gone from his hand," spoke up Hooker. "Land of sorrer! What a world! If you try to be neighborly an' kindly down here it means some one'll be cutting your throat!"

"They won't try it again on you," I assured him. "We did them some damage. They've got to lay up and put on a few patches. And of course they're cowards. They don't want any man's game after he hurts them."

"Mebbe, mebbe," growled Hooker. "Just the same if your friend hadn't noticed them missing fingers I guess they'd trapped us. It was a blessed minute when he come aboard."

* * *

LEAVING them anchored and promising to return as soon as we could, Emery and I took the canoe, paddled up-stream and began feeling about for the flat. This work was very discouraging as the night was black and the flat could not be made out until we should bump into it. Also there was the danger of some of the ruffians being on the shore, let alone the danger that they had discovered the flat and might be aboard of it.

After ascending what my judgment decided was the required distance, we commenced the risky work of making close inshore, criss-crossing back and forth in search of the flat. Once the canoe touched the bank.

After a good two hours of fumbling about, my paddle hit the hull. Touching Emery as a signal for silence, I sent the canoe under the cabin window, made fast, stood up and listened for some suspicious sound. All I could hear was the *lap, lap* of the water spanking against the hull.

Whispering to Emery to remain in the canoe, I made it fast. Then, laying down my rifle, I loosened my ax and slipped to the deck. Very softly and slowly I crawled to the stern and then returned on the other side.

I had returned to the hatch when something touched my leg. Kicking convulsively, I rolled to one side only to have my ankle caught in a vise. I squirmed to a sitting posture and raised the ax, then felt the flat side of a long blade slide across my cheek.

"Emery!" I managed to gasp.

"—— 'n' apples! Of all the tricks!" he gasped.

"I told you to stay in the canoe," I gritted.

"Lawd save a skunk! I got the notion something would jump you," he defended himself. "Thought I heard somebody crawling round the stern when you was at the hatch. Well, well! Of all the tricks!"

The situation had been too tragic to permit of words, and I said nothing. But all the way down the river to find our new friends I was in a cold sweat. The narrowness of our mutual escape sickened me.

The effect on my friend was entirely different. After getting used to the idea that we had grappled and were on the edge of meeting in a death-struggle he began to find something humorous in it, and I heard him chuckling softly and saying—

"Of all the tricks!"

We dropped down through the darkness until the lowing of a cow gave us Hooker's position, and we anchored near them and passed an uneventful night. In the early morning we were astir with Hooker eager to keep us company.

It was vital for the success of my plans that I travel alone, avoiding even Louisville and Michael Lacassagne. There would be spies at Louisville, and did they see me talking with Lacassagne or Nancy Summers, word of my coming and a detailed description of my person would be hurried down the river. Thus far only Harpe and his men had been suspicious of me.

I intended making Old Shawneetown and finishing my part of the work before any one could arrive from the Upper Country to recognize me. To do this would, of course, call for an extra amount of good luck. For all I knew to the contrary Harpe in person, or one of his tools, already had carried my description to the gang's headquarters.

I would have given much to tie up at Louisville and have a talk with the merchant. I would have given infinitely more to tarry there and see the girl. But Lacassagne had advised me to arrive in Old Shawneetown as a desperate character, and did I attempt the rôle and some one at Old Shawneetown should bob up with the information I had carried a bag of talk to Honest Michael I would find myself in the river with my throat cut.

As for the girl, she was sure to be well known, being the daughter of the trader. To be seen talking with her would arouse comment concerning me even though my business down the river was most commonplace.

My plans were greatly hampered by the presence of Emery; for he vowed he would not quit me. He had not been seen by the pirates when the Camp party was massacred, owing to his absence from the boats. Yet by no stretch of the imagination could he pass as a desperate character.

I had tentatively planned to induce him to go ashore at Louisville and then desert him. Against this expedient was the certainty of his raising a rare row and proclaiming my disappearance, doubtless believing me to be a victim of the pirates. That meant a swift canoe taking the news to Old Shawneetown ahead of me. I could picture him raging up and down the water-front, believing I had come to harm, and fiercely demanding of all whom he met—

"Where is Maxwell Broad?"

Better to go ashore myself at Louisville than leave him behind. So I discarded that notion as we trailed after the fleet.

Emery little suspected my half-formed schemes for getting rid of him, and he was boisterously happy. Cloud and rain had given away for one more taste of the beautiful Indian Summer. Haze on the hills and heaven in the air, but to me so unutterably pathetic.

For the Moon of the Falling Leaf always brought me a suggestion of sadness; and yet it was not sorrow. Perhaps it was sympathy, rather than sadness; a melancholy that does not pain. I only know there is no season of the year so rich in reverie-compelling emotions as the Autumn; no other time when I feel so deeply my kinship with Mother Nature.

The effect on the Salem man was different; for after watching the gorgeous procession of painted trees on both sides, he turned to me and whimsically observed—

"Of all the tricks!"

CHAPTER X

I BECOME A DESPERATE CHARACTER

HIDING in the cabin, I saw Hooker and his company tie up at Louisville. I had a mighty desire to follow them ashore and seek the girl. Had she tarried there after delivering my message, or had her self-dependence spurred her on to take to the wilds or the river and work out her destiny unaided?

Lacassagne was a masterful man and rich in tact. I knew she would give him my writing, and I prayed that he had been able to induce her to stay.

Emery appeared to be the sole occupant of our flat. At my direction he had anchored well out from the bank and aloof from the various boats strung along the river-front. The place had grown much during the last nine years. I remembered when it consisted of Clark's blockhouse, a small fort on the bank and a larger one on the east side of the ravine—Twelfth Street—a few cabins scattered through the woods, and eighteen or twenty cabins on Corn Island at the head of the rapids. Now the forest had been pushed farther back and the shore was thickly settled, and the waters were dotted with keels, flats, and broadhorns.

Colonel Boone had visited the spot at the beginning of Lord Dunmore's War, his mission being to warn and bring back surveying-parties. It was at Louisville that boats for the Kentucky country found the end of the journey while their owners struck inland for the regions made known by Boone, Harrod, Logan and other notable pioneers. The town also marked the dividing-line between the Upper and Lower countries. The former included all the river as far as Pittsburg, the latter to New Orleans.

And there was a fine bustle and confusion as I peeped from the cabin window and watched boats unloading their passengers and goods, and other boats making ready to sail and find new lands. There was fiddle-playing and boisterous indulgence in Monongahela, rough but good-natured wrestling among the men, insults and challenges framed in astonishing hyperbole and shouted by boatmen, lowing of cattle and neighing of horses anxious to get ashore or reluctant to go aboard. Also there were soldiers, sent to guard the boatmen as they brought the army's boats down through the rapids.

Across the scene stalked a few friendly Delawares, blanketed from crown to toe, and passively watching their destiny as it was being written by the strange burdens of the river.

Lounging in the sun were sinewy riflemen, their fringed trousers and hunting-shirts reflecting the influence of the savages with whom they fought. These men of the woods often viewed the inrush of families and domestic cattle with almost the same disfavor as that shown by the Indian. They cared nothing for agriculture and were "crowded" if they saw any white smoke besides their own breaking the sky-line. Yet theirs were the imagination and the vision, theirs the refusal to remain "cooped up" in any one section of the country. It was this unrest, this insatiable curiosity to know what lay beyond the hills, what awaited them below the bend, that paved the way for the homemakers.

It was a fine example of man reflecting his environment. The rifleman, silent and observant, and stealthy of movement, unable to forget he was not in a hostile forest; the boatman, blatant and profane and given to ridiculous exaggeration, accustomed to bellowing his speech that his voice might be heard above the roar of the rapids—slouching, indolent figures until called to action, then presenting the combined characteristics of hurricane and wildcat.

An unusually lurid harangue from a skiff serving as pilot for a string of *bateaux* took me to the opposite window, and I recognized Peg Humphry. Lord, how he did love to lay it on! With what earnestness and whole-heartedness did he distribute his wealth of invective! He raged at a white heat as he saw the *bateaux* in danger of engulfment, and yet even in that supreme moment he could not resist taking pride in his satiric abuse. It was obvious from the prideful smile lighting his long, lean visage, as he found a new and unique word-form for damnation tripping from his tongue.

Men on stationary keels or flats were foolish enough to answer him back. This was the sort of duel the fellow's heart hungered for; and leaning far from the skiff he would concentrate his attack on the amateur and discharge his scorching words with the precision of so many bullets.

My inclination was to climb on deck, float down after him and learn if the girl had gone to Lacassagne, how she was and where she was.

But Peg was too well known; to talk with him was equivalent to talking to the whole river. Stifling the last bit of temptation, I called out for Emery to get under way, but it was not until we were several miles below the settlement that I went on deck and helped at the steering-sweep.

We passed the string of boats under Peg's care. He was busy rescuing one stranded on a "planter" close to the Kentucky shore. His voice came with peculiar distinctness, for the roar of the rapids was behind us; if the frost had not already encrimsoned the leaves his language would have scorched them many colors.

A few miles farther on we floated beside a big broadhorn for a spell, the two long steering-oars thrust out from the sides near the bow giving it the appearance of a gigantic water-beetle. I kept in the cabin until we parted from the awkward craft and was interested in the dialog between Emery and the steersmen.

"Where's this air Cave-in-Rocks?" bawled one of the steersmen.

My friend shook his head.

"There's a heap o' whisperin' 'bout the place. Sounds like it was a likely spot to steer clear of," commented the man.

"River-pirates, eh?" rejoined Emery.

"Yas, piruts. Any strange men come near this boat an' we'll fill 'em full of buckshot."

"Tried to board me 'way up above Louisville," Emery proudly informed him. Then excitedly:

"Say, mister, if you ever see a feller with two fingers missing from his left hand just lambast him over the head without no questions. He's a bloody-murderin' devil."

"We'll remember," gratefully replied the steersman. "Say, can't ye hitch up to us an' keep us comp'ny?"

The Salem man regretfully refused, but saw no inconsistency in the fellow's threat to shoot strangers and his invitation for a stranger to come aboard. I feared the broadhorn would never take alarm unless the pirates came with knife between teeth and loudly proclaiming their vocation.

We passed them, and after turning a bend I came on deck and corrected my friend's errors in navigation. That was the beginning of many comments about Cave-in-Rocks. Bluejacket had spoken the name, and now we were hearing it on the river. We caught it at twilight, and under the stars when I stayed at the sweep and exchanged gossip with anchored or drifting boats. It came in querulous whispers. It was commented on in a hushed voice.

A fear of the place, some twenty-five miles below Old Shawneetown, had radiated up-stream until it met and had been absorbed by the down-rushing tide of people. The warnings shouted across from boat to boat were vague and but little understood. It was the voice of fear and was seldom accompanied by any geographical information. Somewhere down the river was a sinister spot—a trap—that all boats must hurry by and give a wide berth to. Among these travelers whom we overtook and passed were some who would stop at Old Shawneetown, and on some of the boats perhaps there were spies, escorting the immigrants to a bloody death.

Except at night I stayed below when passing such craft, for there was always upon me the fear of being recognized when I landed at Old Shawneetown. Now I was glad I had not separated from Emery, for without him at the steering-oar my risks would have been doubled.

Emery was thoroughly informed of my purpose by this time, of course. One night he shrewdly remarked:

"You ain't been seen to be remembered, but every one on the river has seen me. When we go ashore together they'll know you was with me."

I mulled over this, and then decided:

"We won't go ashore together. We'll plan for the boat to make Shawneetown in broad daylight so there'll be no mistake about your coming alone——"

"Alone?"

"Yes. I must leave you a few miles up-stream. When we meet in the settlement it will be as strangers."

"Lordy! I hadn't figgered on going it alone."

"Till my work is done. Of course I may make your acquaintance there. But you keep clear of me unless I signal for you to join me, as I shall play at being a desperate character. Don't show surprize at anything you hear me say or see me do."

"I don't like it, but seeing how I wouldn't stop at Louisville I s'pose you must be the boss. How'll I know you want me if you should happen to want me?"

"If you see me take off my hat and run my hand through my hair, pass by me slowly and keep your ears open, but don't look at me. Have you any money?"

His broad face lengthened. He slowly shook his head and grunted:

"Never thought of that. My little store was on the boat the robbers run off with."

I removed my money-belt and gave him two pistoles, or ten dollars, and said:

"You will try hard to get work. Your belongings were stolen by some river-thief——"

"An' all my friends killed."

"No, no. You came to Limestone with a man who quit you in the night, taking your money and gun. That's your story. You never heard of any massacre. You know nothing about pirates. You don't believe there are any.

"You're from Salem and bound for the Galena lead-mines. You'll live on your boat nights and hunt for work during the day.

"Of course you don't know me. Never saw me before. And above all things don't tote that sword round with you."

THREE miles above the settlement I gave Emery some parting advice and paddled ashore in the canoe. Half a mile inland I struck into an old trail which the Shawnees had used after being driven north from the Cumberland by the Chickasaws and after building Shawneetown. The tribe had abandoned the village in '65, and the trail had been used but little during the last quarter of a century.

Naturally it was overgrown, and only as my feet found the beaten track could I keep the trace. As it was still three hours from sundown I took my time, not wishing to arrive until nightfall.

Old Shawneetown, as occupied by the whites, consisted of some log cabins built by the French when they settled there after the original owners had moved north from the river. These cabins were only a few hundred rods back from the bank, the site being a most beautiful one and commanding long stretches of the stream, and making it an ideal lookout station for those interested in the arrival of boats.

It was dusk when I quit the woods and paused to study the settlement. My long hair was filled with twigs and burrs, and my face was sadly scratched by briers. My whole appearance, I prided myself, was that of one travel-worn. As I made for the nearest cabin I walked with a swagger and worked my brow into a scowl.

A man stepped to the door, a breed, and surveyed me sullenly.

"Can I squat here for the night and get a bite to eat?" I asked.

"Who you?" he inquired.

"I got several names," I replied. "I don't use any of 'em in eating and sleeping."

"Better go there," he said, pointing to a larger cabin, one that was recently built and that stood apart from the others.

"Huh! I'm not good enough for you?" I growled.

"Got money?" he asked, eying me sharply.

I shook my head and replied—

"But I'll get some mighty soon."

"Where?"

He was much interested.

I twisted my usually amiable face into a villainous leer and answered:

"That's telling. Mebbe dig it out the ground. Then again mebbe I'll fish it out the river."

"From where?"

"None of your —— business."

Neither my words nor manner seemed to give offense. To the contrary, he was now eying me with approval.

"You go there."

And again he pointed to the cabin.

"Find Corkendale."

"I ain't got no money," I said.

"Find Corkendale. Tell him you fish gold out the river," he said.

To discourage further talk he stepped inside and closed the door.

Well, it was my business to make acquaintances; and Corkendale, whoever he might be, sounded promising. Mumbling angrily, I turned and walked toward the river-bank.

I passed more breeds, a few Frenchmen, some Indians stupid from drink and two men I knew to be Americans. I decided that the French and drunken Indians were honest, although they knew the pirates by sight and name. The Americans impressed me as being hard characters. If any deviltry was going on I believed they would be in it.

I had no doubt as to the breed I had just met. I would wager every pistole in my belt against a handful of bullets that he was a tool for the gang.

As I lounged along toward the bank, walking as if foot-weary, I saw him making in the same direction. I looked out on the river and the light sufficed for me to see Emery making our Kentucky flat fast against the bank. There were several other flats near by, and two keelboats.

A few rods from the shore was anchored a clumsy ark. It was the first one I had seen on the Ohio since early Summer, and I took time to look it over. I estimated it as being a hundred feet long by twenty in width. Its heavy timbers must have cost a round hundred dollars.

The bulwarks at the stern and bow were V-shaped, and it was steered by side-sweeps as well as by the long stern oar. It was practically at the mercy of a current. It had a small house forward for the family or crew and a pen fenced off at the stern for the live stock.

This type of craft originated on the Susquehanna and Delaware and was now introduced to the Ohio on the assumption that the Indian warfare was over because of the treaty signed in grand council at the beginning of the year. Difficult to handle and lacking a roof, it was easy to capture, whether the assailants be red or white. It was the last style of craft to risk life in on the Ohio so long as there was danger from the savages and pirates.

Of course it could not go up-stream, and its timbers would be sold for a fourth of their cost and made into furniture or a cabin. It was simply an unwieldy, immense flatboat with a small house on it, and both ends coming to a point.

The breed paused a moment to inspect Emery and the flat, then gave his attention to the ark, as doubtless he had kept tabs on it ever since it blundered to its anchorage. The very fact that the ungainly thing was anchored some distance from the bank bespoke caution or timidity. I could make out several men and women on board, some fishing, the others busy with the live stock.

Amidships there seemed to be quite a bit of stuff stored, although it was impossible for me to make out the nature of the cargo. The boats along the shore might be immune from attack, but I pitied the people on the ark.

As the breed and I gazed a skiff put off and a man came toward us. At the same time Emery finished tying up the flat and leaped ashore. He was carrying his sword, and the breed forgot his interest in the ark in his amazement at the unusual weapon. He approached Emery and tried to make conversation, but the Salem man was carrying no bag of talk. He let out a roar and the breed hastily backed away. Evidently my friend's journey had been beset with annoyances and his temper worn to a fighting edge.

He saw me but gave no sign of recognition. This was as it should be, only it happened I was most desirous of speaking with him. I took off my hat and scratched my head.

He swung in to pass behind me and dropped his sword.

"The man coming in the skiff. Warn him to sail the ark tonight—and to keep going."

Emery brushed up his sword and wandered on, moving parallel to the shore so as to intercept the man. Having done what I could, I wheeled about and made for the cabin, walking slowly but not forgetting my swagger.

A light sprang up by the window. Some one was playing a fiddle, and there was the sound of much rough merriment. I suspected that the Monongahela was beginning to register.

DRAWING my face into what I hoped was an ugly leer, I poked my head inside the door. The fiddle and singing ceased as if by magic. There were a dozen men in the room, but besides the jugs and kegs in one corner I could detect none of the arrangements that go with keeping an inn. There was but the one room; it contained no furnishings except a long table made of planks ripped from some boat, and a rough stool for each man.

Behind a small table, which fenced off the corner containing the liquor, sat a tall, hawk-faced man. I selected him as the dominating figure in the gathering.

He caught my wandering gaze and genially called out:

"Come in. Travelin' far?"

I stepped inside and moved along the wall till I stood before him, then replied—

"All depends."

Motioning toward a cup and jug on the table, he remarked:

"Young feller like you can go about where he wants to, I should say. Where you from?"

"That's telling," I cunningly retorted, seizing the cup and tilting the jug. "I come in a hurry and most the way on foot."

"Then you're from the Upper Country and bound for the Lower."

"I sha'n't go back up-river," I admitted. "'Slong's I don't do that then one place's good's another if there's enough to eat and drink."

"You've been a soldier?" This a bit sharply.

"What of it? You ain't paid to catch deserters."

"Bless your heart, no. No young feller of spirit wants to be bossed round by men who don't know half as much as he does."

I warmed to him and indignantly declared:

"Treated worse'n any dog. Officers can go up-river on a furlough. A soldier ain't got as many rights as a Injun."

"Come! You seem to be a young feller of gumption. Know any one down here?"

"No. That's why I come."

And I grinned slyly. Then soberly—

"There's one man I'm keen to meet, though."

"Name of?"

"Corkendale."

I heard the men shuffle uneasily behind me. The man before me was about to lift the cup to his lips. Now he lowered it and stared at me intently. His eyes were as opaque as china, and dull and dead.

"Wise men are careful about what names they speak down here," he murmured.

"I was told to speak it here and not till I got here," I defended myself.

"Who give you that name?" he gently asked.

"Abner Harpe."

Again the shuffling of feet back of me, but I gave it no heed.

"Harpe. Harpe," mused the man before me. "Seems if I heard it before. Where'd you see him?"

"At his tavern, a few miles beyond Limestone."

"Who was there with him?"

"Sim Juber 'n' Abel Tumy. T'others I didn't see; they was out on business."

"Old Hoss Summers there?"

"Dead. Killed in the Injun country."

"——! Then he didn't git it!"

A growl rose from the men, but their leader quieted them by softly commanding:

"Shut up—*you*. I reckon it ain't lost. When we git round to it we'll git it."

"Dave Trench went along with him and was wiped out," I added.

"Trench gone! Of all the —— luck. Say, young feller, how'd you know all this?"

"Word was fetched to Harpe. He told me."

"Huh!" grunted the man, this thin lips compressing. "So some of Abner's men was in the party, eh? Looks bad. Looks mighty bad. I only hope Abner didn't go for to feather his own nest. I hope the Injuns did do for Summers and not Abner or his men. I hope so for Abner's sake."

"How'd they feather their nest——"

"No matter. Don't ask questions, young feller. I'll ask the questions. You just boil down your attention and git your answers right. Was the Summers gal along when her paw was killed?"

I shook my head and looked blank. Then I said I didn't know anything about the girl. The news of Summers' death seemed to upset him quite a bit. Or perhaps he was worrying for fear Harpe had stolen a march on him and had brought back something from the hidden cabin. Possibly the keg of jewelry.

"Of course you don't know if any of Harpe's men was with Summers?"

"Not 'less it was Dave Trench."

"Nor if they brought back anything from the trip?"

"I don't know nothing except I'm tired of standing up," I rebelled.

"Prester," he called.

I turned my head and saw a chap with a squint in his eyes rise from the table.

"Kick your stool over here for this feller."

"Ain't he big enough to find his own stool?" growled Prester.

"Carefully," warned my interrogator, his lips curling unpleasantly.

The man Prester sulkenly kicked the stool to me and I sank down on it.

"Summers had some property that belonged to me," the leader went on. "Harpe's all right, but I didn't know but what some of his men took the property after Summers was killed."

I shook my head and stared stupidly. Scowling at his liquor, he remained silent for a few moments, then lifted his head and announced:

"Hoss Summers dead and no word of it sent to us. No word about the stuff he was to fetch here. What do you think, boys?"

"I'll bet the old hound killed Trench and made off!" called out a voice.

My man pursed his lips and pondered over this suggestion.

"It might be that," he admitted. "I sent Dave because I knew he'd play square."

In a sudden burst of fury, all the more terrible because I was unprepared for it, he raged:

"But Harpe knew about it! How'd he know? Did he stand in with Summers and plan——"

"This new cuss to hear everything?" interrupted Prester, eying me viciously.

Instantly every eye was focused on me, and some one growled—

"Who is he, anyway?"

"Give your name," commanded the leader.

"Name of Mount," I shortly replied.

"And you claim to be a friend of Harpe's."

"You said that; I didn't. I know Harpe. Not exactly what you'd call a friend."

And my little smile was thoroughly genuine.

"Got any money?"

I laughed ironically. He accepted it for an answer, and asked—

"What made you think I'd help you?"

"I've given my name. What's yours? Corkendale?"

"What if it is?"

"I don't give a —— if you be or ain't Corkendale," I spiritedly retorted. "Harpe told me to ask for that name here in Old Shawneetown. I've been questioned and looked over all I'll stand for till I know who I'm talking with."

"Young feller, that high-and-mighty air won't help you any."

"Let me cut his comb a bit," eagerly cried Prester.

"You shut up," advised my man to Prester.

"I don't want it to help me any," I said. "I've always landed on my feet. Reckon I've got in with the wrong people."

WITH that I turned to depart; but instantly my way was blocked by the men leaping to their feet and crowding in between me and the door. Prester tried to get to me, but a man with one eye slipped by him and made himself offensive by trying to trip me up. I seized him by the neck and hurled him against his mates.

A roar of curses, and steel was out. I leaped back to the table, brought the muzzle of my rifle in line with the leader's long, thin head and snapped—

"Call 'em off!"

"Boys, behave," he quietly ordered.

The men fell back in their places. During the whole episode I do not believe he had blinked an eye.

"You're a young man of metal," he approved.

"I'm tarnation desperate," I bitterly assured him, lowering my gun.

"A mighty good way to be," he soothed. "But I'm the man you're looking for. I'm Corkendale. We're mighty 'tic'lar about who mixes in with us. Harpe's one of us—so long as he plays square. Mebbe I can help you."

"I ain't above being helped. The men got me riled when they started in to jam me round."

"They won't bother you any more," he promised, his voice cold and distinct. "You hear that, Prester?"

"I've got ears."

"Then be careful and don't lose them. Have a drink, Mount."

It was fiery stuff, but I attacked it with gusto; and as Corkendale continued silent I swept my gaze over the room. If there was a man in the room who was not a murderer several times over it was because he had been balked in opportunities.

The most presentable one in the lot was Corkendale, and yet none had eyes like his. That he was their master spoke eloquently for his evil qualities. Suddenly he lifted his head and said to me—

"Stand up under the torch and face the men."

I obeyed. He continued:

"Every one take a square look at him. Has any one ever seen him before?"

I withstood their boring gaze without betraying any of the uneasiness disturbing my insides. After a prolonged stare they began shaking their heads. Corkendale nodded and looked pleased. He assured me:

"We'll give you a chance. You'll come with us tonight and we'll show you how you can live fat and easy."

Before I could express my gratitude there arose the ——'s own racket outside—the thin cries of a man badly hurt or frightened, and the roaring of what sounded to be a mad bull. Before the startled men could even gain their feet a form leaped through the doorway with five feet of steel flashing after him. Back of the steel glowed the big face of Emery, and he was bellowing:

"Two fingers gone, you vermin! I'll have your head!"

All my plans, aye, even my life, were in the scales; for I could not see the blundering dolt go down to death without interfering; and any show of mercy would be my death-warrant.

The fugitive dived head foremost among his mates. I gave a shout and struck up the sword with my ax, clinched with Emery and forced him back through the door. The last is a figure of speech in that it grossly exaggerates. In reality the second his furious eyes met mine he began recovering his sense and permitted me to hurl him over the threshold into the darkness.

"Idiot! Run!" I whispered in his ear as the pack fought to get out into the night and be in at the kill.

He had a few precious seconds' leeway. Being once more sane and canny, he hurled me back against the men trying to jam through the doorway. I flung out my arms and swept several over backward. Then to give the scene a fitting climax I regained my feet and raced into the darkness contrary to the direction taken by Emery, pulled my pistol and fired.

CHAPTER XI

WE MAKE PROGRESS

CORKENDALE was in a furious rage although his voice was low and his words even and deliberate. Entering the cabin, he wheeled on the men and murmured:

"You fools! To let one man get away like that! If it hadn't been for Mount here he'd have done for Murty and walked off without a scratch.

"Prester, take a man and go find him. Be quick because we're leaving for the cave in another twenty minutes. Mason will begin to think we've cleared out the country for good."

Turning to me he said:

"You'll do. You've got guts. You ain't swept off your feet like these fools. You've got a head. Stick by me and I'll make your fortune. Play any game and I'll cut your throat."

"I ain't up to any games, and my throat is tough," I said.

With a low growling sound, such as a tree-cat makes when worrying its food, he stepped closer and in a voice that did not carry beyond my ears warned me—

"High spirits is all right; but you try them too far on me and I'll split your harslet."

I nodded to show that I understood. He immediately screwed up his features in a pretense of amiableness, and for the benefit of the others remarked:

"I'm just dangling the bit before you. But you don't have to let any one else put it into your mouth. I'll do considerable talking, but you don't have to take any lip from these other fellers."

The man called Murty now edged forward. He was a villainous-looking chap, whose many crimes had transformed his face into that of a beast.

"I owe ye a good word for pitchin' in, friend," he croaked.

He extended a hairy paw. I knew it was the hand that had left the bloody imprint on Camp's boat, yet I accepted it and pressed it warmly, consoling myself for the contamination by believing that there was to come a time when Emery should not be balked in his desire to have the creature's head.

"That'll be enough of thanksgiving," sneered Corkendale to Murty. "If you'd had the courage of a flea you'd 'a' downed that wild man and brought us his hair. You take six men and board that ark and sail it down-river. Rest of you finish your drink and we'll be going."

The men took their time, I noticed, in disposing of the last draft, and as Corkendale became lost in his thoughts the jug was slyly circulated until some twenty minutes had elapsed. Then the leader jumped to his feet with a brisk oath and motioned for the men to follow.

I fell in by his side; but before we could quit the cabin Prester and his companion entered and reported that they could find no trace of the man, and that the darkness of the night would make his discovery an accident. Prester did the talking; he had barely finished before Murty and his six were back to announce that the ark had departed.

Corkendale was thrown into a rare rage at this piece of information, although one of the gang, an elderly man, consoled him a bit by declaring that Mason would probably get the boat down the river.

Prester, who had been eying me furtively, now spoke up and offered:

"S'pose I stick along here till morning. Reckon I could find that chap if he ain't lit out."

Corkendale slapped him on the back and cried:

"You're a new one, but you're all right. —— my body! But I reckon a few more new men will keep things moving as they oughter move."

Then to me—

"What do you think of this young feller's nerve in staying and closing that wild man's yawp?"

I suspected he was testing *my* nerve, so I replied:

"That don't call for much courage. Let me stick along with him. Between us we'll fetch the varment's hide into camp if he's to be found."

"Good! Good! Right spirit," murmured Corkendale, rubbing his hands and smiling on me.

In an instant his features became hard and repellent as he was addressing Murty and demanded the particulars of his quarrel with the stranger. Murty twisted and shuffled in deep embarrassment, but under the hard, compelling eye of his chief he explained:

"Never seen the man afore, an' yet he seemed to know me. I was down by the breed's cabin leanin' ag'in' the winder an' talkin' to him on the inside. He was tellin' me he'd sent a likely-lookin' feller up here and just then this stranger come along with that blamed big carving-knife an' stopped to ask the breed a question about where he could git put up for the night. He stood right side o' me an' I swear I never seen him before, chief. Swear to it. An' the light from inside shined right on both of us.

"Then all of a suddent he fetched a hoot an' begin yelpin' 'bout my hand an' pointin' to my missin' fingers. I was plum flabbergasted. Next thing I knew he was wavin' that dod-blamed sword an' leapin' at me. I took to runnin'. That's all."

"No; not quite all," muttered Corkendale.

Then he began eying him in silence, shifting his basilisk gaze from the man's dark face to his crippled hand. There was something in the steady scrutiny that planted fear in Murty's heart, something that gave him an inkling of his master's thoughts. He shifted from foot to foot more rapidly and held the maimed left hand behind him while the sweat began showing on his low forehead. At last Corkendale spoke.

"It's too bad for you—about that hand. Mighty unfortunate. Sorter gives you away, don't it?"

One who did not know Murty's history would have commented on the deep sympathy in his leader's voice. But the effect on Murty was to shrivel him up.

"All right. Let's light out," concluded Corkendale.

I read a terrible fear in Murty's eyes as he edged through the doorway, always keeping his left hand close at his side, a fear that surpassed his fright when he fled from Emery. He hurried ahead of us yet did not offer to quit the group. Corkendale fell in between Prester and me, hooked his arms through ours and sorrowfully said:

"It's a shame about Murty. Mighty useful feller. Does his work well, too. But that hand of his makes it easy to pick him out.

"Rather bad for the rest of us, too. Git one of us and it's like unwinding a ball of yarn. Well, well; we'll see."

Prester betrayed an ugly streak by resentfully declaring:

"Not to my notion to have my head pushed through a rope just 'cause a mate has two fingers gone. If he's known, what's to hinder his being snagged and made to tell all he knows?"

"None of your business," growled Corkendale, pushing him aside and coming to a halt. "You leave the worrying to me. Murty may leave us, but it's for me to say when. Don't you go to taking over any authority, my young bantam. Make that sassy talk to Mason and he'd comb you."

PRESTER slunk to the rear. Corkendale chuckled and confided to me:

"Good workman he'll make. But he needs blooding. Still, you prob'ly see it as he does—about Murty?"

"I'm keener about this man that ran after Murty," I said.

"Never lost the scent for a second, did you?" he said admiringly. "Now about helping Prester catch that feller and 'tend to him. Still want to?"

"I asked for the chance. If he's here we'll find him. Maybe it'll take till morning."

"Better not let things happen in the daylight if there's any one round," he cautioned. "We run this place just now; but if some one should drift in with a fighting spirit and take after us 'stead of working with us he'd get quite a few to foller him. Whenever they do start after us they'll rake up everything they can."

"We'll be careful. Leastways, I will."

"Then you shall stay with Prester. He's full of hustle, but he needs some one to slow him down and be reasonable."

"Good!" I declared; but I did not fully mean it.

My one great desire was to remain alone, find Emery and get him away to some safe place. Prester would be a hindrance. It might have to be represented that Emery caught him alone and killed him.

Corkendale called out to Prester to come forward and briefly explained how he and I were to remain and make a still hunt. The fellow's assurance at once returned, and with a complacence that annoyed me he jauntily remarked:

"Now you're talking the right kind of turkey. We'll git him."

"After it's over how shall we find you?" I said to Corkendale.

"Prester knows the way. Shall look for you two inside of twenty-four hours,"

The word to march was given. The last man to leave the cabin had extinguished the torch. Now they were off down the river to where they had left their boats, leaving Prester and me standing alone in the darkness.

There was a certain awkwardness in the two of us, perfect strangers, being left together in this fashion. I could not see him except as a black figure against the dark wall of night. To his curious, searching eyes I knew I presented the same impersonal appearance.

"Queer sort of a tavern where every one goes away and quits it. What's to hinder some one stealing the liquor?"

"They don't dare," he chuckled. "I asked that same question when I joined a few days ago. One of the men told me it was tried once; but when the settlers see the thief's hands nailed to his own cabin door there wa'n't any more of that sort of work.

"It ain't a reg'lar tavern. It was built just for the gang. It's open only when the boys come up for a good time. We do most of our drinking up here. No one 'less he was a stranger would ever think of coming near the place.

"I reckon some strangers have blundered in, sent by the breed when they looked like having some money on 'em. But suchlike ain't never been seen to come out again."

"How many in the settlement can we count on as being with us?"

"Not so many as you might think. Not so many as Corkendale reckons on. Mason has a clearer idee of it. He knows some of the settlers who 'pear mighty glad to have us buy supplies of 'em, would be tickled to death if the soldiers would snoop down and clean us out. Corkendale thinks if you throw enough gold round you've got every one for a friend. I like him better'n I do Mason, but he makes a mistake in his reckonings at times."

"What made you join up?"

"None of your business," came the sharp retort, swift as a fencer's blade.

"No harm meant. No secret about me. Come down from Redstone and tried to make an honest living. Things went against me. Cleared up a little patch and in breaking up the new ground got the fever and shakes. Got discouraged and found it was easier this way."

"Well," slowly began Prester, and there was no resentment in his voice now, "such soft speaking makes everything all right. My case is same's yours. What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't say. It *is* Mount."

He laughed softly and said nothing; but I knew he was staring at me, and it got on my nerves.

"We must be about our work," I said. "Suppose you go down-stream while I work up, to make sure the fellow isn't hiding on the bank. Then we can rest till morning and with the first light beat up the woods."

"Name of Mount, eh?" he mused.

"And half a dozen other names," I said, my irritation showing.

"Like myself," he murmured. "But I don't fancy going down-stream."

"Why?"

I was genuinely amazed, as he impressed me with being very reckless.

"The Indians are out."

"What Indians?" The query fell automatically from my lips with never a thought of Lacassagne's arrangement by which I should recognize his agent.

"The River Indians."

Now I was remembering; and, greatly surprized and hugely delighted, I returned—

"Then they must be White Indians."

"Right to a shilling," he softly whispered, finding my hand and shaking it convulsively. "You're Maxwell Broad?"

"I am. I never murdered any one in my life. And you are——"

"Prester. Using my own name as no one on the river knows me."

"He sent you to help me?"

"Michael Lacassagne. Yes."

"I'm glad, more glad than you can know. If you had been one of the gang, I should have done for you and dumped you into the river and then told Corkendale that Emery did it."

"Emery?"

"The man who chased Murty. A friend of mine, but foolish at times. We must find him. Now that he and his sword have been seen he is a marked man. He must get back up-river."

AS WE walked along the river-bank he told me how he had joined the gang. It was much like my coming. He had played the part of a reckless, vicious wretch, and had disarmed one of the men in a knife fight, after which episode Corkendale had accepted him.

"I've been waiting for you ever since," he said. "Every new man to show up I've hung around and tried to learn if he was the man Lacassagne sent me to help. But there was always something about each stranger that warned me I was barking up the wrong tree."

"Well, we're both inside with neither being killed."

"Oh, don't think it's all smooth sailing for us," he quickly warned. "We're being tried out. We'll be watched pretty close.

"Corkendale believes in me, I think. Believes in you, too, as much as he'd believe in any new man. He's silky smooth, but he's apt to form his opinions on the jump.

"But Mason— I forget; you haven't met Mason. He's a different bird. I'm more scared of him than of Corkendale. He's queer. He don't come up here to drink with the boys very often. 'Fraid he'll get a bullet, or a knife from one of the gang. He's suspicious. So far as he goes you 'n' me will be on trial if we stay in the gang two years."

"Then we can't make him believe in us?"

"Not 'way through. Never. He trusts no man beyond tomorrer's sun. He's even suspicious of Harpe and Corkendale.

"There's a row on over some jewelry that Harpe had collected from the boats he'd robbed in his district. He didn't fetch the loot down to be divided. Said it was too risky.

"Got haughty 'bout it and 'lowed that as a partner in the game it was time Corkendale and Mason come to him. But those two 'low he's been collecting a little gang of his own, and they don't dast go to him 'less they take their fighting men along. They sent Summers to fetch their share—two-thirds—down to them. It never arrived. Now you say the trader's dead."

"He had the stuff and skipped into the Indian country and hid it," I explained. "Then they must have got after him, for he went to get it. They sent Dave Trench along to make sure he didn't play crooked."

Finishing this topic, he reminded me:

"You're the boss. What's next?"

"Find Emery and 'kill' him. I'll take his sword as a trophy. Then he can make for Louisville and have Lacassagne send down enough honest men to clean out the nest. If we don't find Emery, I'll have to 'kill' you and blame it on to Emery, then make for the cave alone while you go to Louisville.

"If we wait one of two things will happen: Either the gang will split and scatter, for Corkendale won't hold on much longer; or Harpe or some of his men will come along. If the last happens my game is up."

"I'd rather stick along here," replied Prester. "Why don't you git 'killed' and go after the Louisville men?"

"No. I'm in charge of this affair. You must go if we fail to find Emery."

He accepted this as final, sensible fellow that he was, although his adventurous spirit inclined him to keep with the gang and be at the focus of the fighting when the disruption came. Now that we were allies we did not separate but followed the bank down-stream until Prester placed a hand on my shoulder and whispered:

"Softly now. Just around the next bend is where the gang left their two dugouts. They always leave their boats there when they come up for a drunk."

"Corkendale was in a hurry. They must be gone by this time," I impatiently retorted.

I had hardly uttered the words when we caught the sound of voices. Moving forward, we soon came in sight of lights. I pressed ahead with my new friend at my heels, nor did I have any fault to find with his woodcraft.

As we drew nearer we could see Corkendale and his men grouped on the bank above two big dugouts and one small one. By the light of the torches we saw that they were standing in a circle around two men, Corkendale and Murty. Something had come to a crisis.

"We'll put it to a vote," announced Corkendale.

"That's the idee! That makes it all reg'lar!" applauded a shaggy ruffian.

"If ye work it on me then some one will be workin' it on th' rest of ye," wailed a pleading voice.

"—— me if they ain't about to get rid of Murty," whispered Prester.

Cold shivers ran up and down my back. To see men killed while fighting is vastly different from being a witness to cold-blooded murder. Not but what the river would be the richer for Murty's death; not but what I could have enjoyed killing him for his share in the horrible scene enacted on Camp's boat. But to watch him done to death by his own mates was revolting.

Murty now continued, his voice raised shrilly:

"I'm tellin' ye that if one man can be wiped out like a dawg, then any man in the gang ain't safe. We oughter all stand together through thick an' thin."

"That's what we all opine," dryly replied Corkendale. "But no man can expect to put a score of necks in a noose just on the chance of keeping his own life going for a bit longer."

"Don't, fellers! Don't!" groaned Murty, wheeling about and extending his hands to each man in the circle. "We're all old friends, you 'n' me. Think of the times we've had, overhaulin' flat an' keel, at the cabin drinkin', an' the likes. An' ain't I allers been true blue? Finsin, ye speak up one word for me!"

"Stop yer slobberin'," was the man Finsin's retort.

And each time Murty's gesture of supplication was made it served only to tighten the bearded lips more grimly; for it focused the attention of the men on the hand that had two digits missing; and that hand was throwing a shadow over the life of every man in the gang. Murty's hand had caused him to be recognized by a stranger, and the sight had turned the stranger into a madman with courage enough to carry his attack right to the very door of the gang's lair in the settlement.

The stranger's words of recognition, supplemented by Murty's own unwise confession, were burned into the brain of every man in the circle. There was no hiding the hand, no disguising it. Whoever walked by his side through a river settlement might expect to have a mob of infuriated men surround him. It was worse than a contagious disease, for the sick might recover and mingle with his fellows again.

There was not one of the bandits now who would keep the unfortunate company. To keep such a man in the gang would be a constant invitation for bullet and noose for the simple reason that the man shunned would grow to resent his mates' attitude, would reach the pitch when he would hold it against them and seek to betray them. And the instinct of self-preservation burned hot in the evil brood.

"Stop yer yappin'!" growled one of the circle. "Any one would think the whole river was bein' burnt up to hear ye squawk."

"But it's my life!" moaned Murty in a throaty whisper.

"Yer life any more valuable than mine?" challenged another.

"Yer life can save our lives," another informed him. "An' ye wa'n't so finicky 'bout a mate's life when some of us was in that tight corner up near Wheelin' an' Bud an' Eliab was shot. Ye was the first to say we oughter do for 'em so's they couldn't blab when they got caught. An' ye turned the trick yerself—an' they never blabbed."

"They mighter got well an' been sound's ever," spoke up another. "But that hand of yers won't never git them two fingers back."

"Bud 'n' Eliab's case was different," gasped Murty, streams of sweat pouring down his leather-colored face. "We was tryin' to git away with a crowd at our heels. There ain't any such danger now. Give me a canoe an' lemme drop down-river. I'll take my chance in makin' New 'Leans. That lets all of ye out of any risk along of me."

"What if you're caught on the way down?" asked Corkendale pleasantly. "Wouldn't you give up every name in this gang, tell just how every man looked? Wouldn't you tell everything you know about us—where we live, where we play, where we hide the stuff?"

"No, no, no!" passionately declared Murty. "They could cut me up for catfish bait afore I'd ever squeal."

A LOUD guffaw greeted this assertion. Feeling secure, the gang was playing with the poor devil. He was many times a murderer and deserved no mercy from honest men; yet, low as he was, he was entitled to mercy from his mates.

Corkendale's interest in the situation began to wane. Ignoring the gesticulating and thoroughly frantic victim he asked the men:

"What say? Here, or wait till we get back when Mason can have a voice in it?"

"Not Mason! He's a devil. He's *the* devil!" screamed Murty. Prester nudged me.

The smile slipped from the leader's face; the silk vanished from his voice. Like the grating of a file against iron came his words of doom.

"Murty, you've put us all in danger. If it was your face you could grow whiskers or shave 'em off; but you can't change your hand——"

"But I lost 'em fightin' for the gang!" wailed Murty.

"Better men have lost their lives an' ain't kickin' 'bout it," cried one of the circle.

Without heeding the interruption, Corkendale continued:

"You was careless and let some of our customers see that hand, and what was worse you let 'em get clear to know it when they see it again. When you come down the river on the jump to tell us that six flats had got clean away you never said nothing about one of the men knowing you. That's bad—very bad.

"We hate like sin to snuff out an old mate, but one man mustn't be allowed to tie a rope round all our necks. Just now there ain't any law down here, and we can laff at 'em. But time's soon coming when we must dig out. When that time comes there mustn't be any marked man floating round to be made tell all he knows. We all have to take our chances. It seems you have lost out."

As he spoke his hand crept to his waist, his dull, leaden eyes staring into the wretch's convulsed face as if he were holding him helpless just as a snake can keep a bird still. I was powerless. I did not care to see what would happen within the next minute, but found myself compelled to look.

Murty's gaze wandered to the slowly moving hand. He saw the fingers caressing the butt of a long pistol. He knew the end had come, and that within another few moments he would say his last farewell to the old Ohio. Love of life was as strong in him as in the most righteous of men; more strong, I assume, for he could have no belief in another and a better world to comfort him.

With a groan he threw up his hands and tottered backward as if about to fall. The circle instinctively fell back from him. In another second he had seized a torch and with a back-handed motion had hurled the blazing end full into Corkendale's thin face. Then he was bounding through the bush, his animal cunning having fooled them at the great moment.

Prester and I crouched on our heels. Corkendale gave one cry of pain and then fell to cursing with horrible earnestness as he pawed at his scorched face.

"Git after him," he whined, his fury reducing his voice to a rag. "Git after him. If he lives to leave Shawneetown it'll be to fetch a parcel of soldiers down on us. Catch him alive if you can, and fetch him to me. Go!"

With a whoop the circle straightened out into a line, the torches evenly placed, and the pursuit was on. Prester and I fell back rapidly. For a minute Murty could be heard crashing through the undergrowth; then he began to play Indian and depend upon cunning rather than speed.

I slipped on a root in taking a backward step and betrayed our position. Sharp ears heard it, and the men nearest us rushed forward, thinking it was Murty. With Prester abreast of me I passed deeper into the forest, then turned to move parallel to the river. It was our plan to reach the settlement and go forth to meet the gang as if ignorant of what had caused the commotion.

It was curious that I should feel sympathy for Murty insofar as to wish him to escape his mates. The man was abhorrent and must die; but the tigerish ferocity of his fellow murderers in acting the executioner went against the grain.

"Settlement!" panted Prester as we left the woods and found ourselves in an area of stumps.

We were passing the first cabin and making straight for the river when a scream rang out. It was scarcely commenced before it was finished, and was so abruptly terminated that the same thought came to both of us.

"Death in that!" whispered Prester.

And it was imperative that we should be on the scene with the least possible delay would we avoid suspicion. I hoped it was Murty and not Emery, but if the former I could not understand the absence of any noise.

No shots had been fired, and it seemed impossible that any of the gang could get near enough to use a knife without some confusion resulting. Nor were there any voices to announce that the chase had ended. But as we neared the shore I saw torches bobbing out of the woods. The first torch cut in across us, and a soft voice hailed:

"Who is it? I fire."

"Mount and Prester!" cried Prester. "Who've you got? That hound that chased Murty?"

Corkendale held the torch higher and identified us beyond all doubt; then said—

"We hoped it was you fellers doing for him."

"Ain't found him yet," I said.

Corkendale began running in a wide circle, holding the torch close to the ground. Suddenly he gave a yell and came staggering back to us and the men who were now streaming in from the woods. With my heart pounding painfully and my feet heavy as lead I gained his side and asked—

"Who is it?"

"*What* is it?" he corrected with a tremor in his smooth voice.

Prester snatched the torch and ran forward; then we all saw it, the headless trunk of a man. Finsin shouted the name of his Maker in a paroxysm of horror.

"It's Murty's clothes," whispered Corkendale.

"Here's the rest of him!" exclaimed another.

The men crowded closer together for mutual protection, and as others ran up and gazed on the ghastly exhibit the torches were raised high and frightened eyes were turned toward the black woods. Murty had been beheaded.

I knew he must have encountered Emery, who had vowed to do this terrible thing because of the crimes of the crippled hand. And, remembering the apron with the large red dots, I was easily reconciled to the scoundrel's fate, although the gruesome nature of the execution sent me into a spell of shivering and shuddering.

"Where is he?" softly asked Corkendale, now master of himself. "What was you two fellers doing you wasn't here to stop him?"

"Stop him?" I indignantly replied. "Why didn't poor Murty stop him? See, he had his knife out and is still clinging to it. What is this creature that comes out of the night and chops off heads?"

And I glanced uneasily over my shoulder as if fearing a similar fate.

"He's just a two-legged critter, you fool," bitterly retorted Corkendale. "I s'posed you two new fellers was going to show your spirit by letting the life out of him."

"Reckon we've got enough spirit, only we can't see through pitch darkness," growled Prester. "Give us a little more time. We ain't hunting him with torches, neither."

"They'd better be after him, boss, while the trail's warm," suggested Finsin, casting a hungry glance down the river. "He's up-stream somewheres or we'd 'a' met him as we come along."

"We'll be after him," I promised. "And he won't cut our heads off, not by a long chalk. Wish you fellers would clear out for good so's we won't make any mistakes. We're going to jump everything that moves and ask questions afterwards. Poor Murty! He might 'a' been saved——"

"Stow that talk!" growled Corkendale. "Good job if it stops with him. Murty was a treacherous hound. Trying to git away to blab on us at Louisville.

"Come on, men. We'll leave these fellers a clear field. They can knife anything they come across."

THEN he gave orders for the remains of Murty to be cast into the river, and after the men had performed the task he swung off down-stream with his torches and terrible crew pressing close at his heels. Although there was no question of the man's courage I noticed that he soon rearranged the order of his march and sent a torch ahead, one on the flank between him and the woods and had one bring up the rear. I waited until the lights had disappeared below the bend, then said to Prester—

"Now to find my friend."

"Yes, to find him. That's easier said then done," muttered Prester.

"I don't think it'll be so hard. I've only waited until I was sure the gang is off for good. I don't think they'll send any one back to spy on us."

Prester laughed in quiet amusement. "Spy on us?" he exclaimed. "You couldn't hire one of those murderers to prowl around in this darkness for all the loot ever fished out of the river. All they think of is to make their dugouts and hurry back to the cave. If you can find him you'd better get busy."

My mode of procedure was very simple. It consisted of softly whistling "The Pleasant Ohio." I had done this for a minute when I caught a faint whistle in reply. I listened until satisfied that it was the air of the popular ballad, and then repeated a bit of it, ending with a short, peremptory signal. Something crawled up over the river-bank.

"Emery?" I challenged, holding my rifle ready.

"Broad?" was the counter challenge.

I assured him, and his short, square form rose upright before us, but on beholding the figure of Prester he snarled and I heard the *swish* of the sword. I tripped Prester on his face and fell on top of him.

"Treachery!" gurgled Prester, his face in the mud.

"Emery! You fool!" I hissed.

"Lord save all ordinary sinners!" he bleated. "Lost my head when I seen two where I s'pose there'd be only one. Where be you?"

"Where's that confounded sword?" I angrily demanded, climbing to my feet.

"I'm leaning on it. I'm all through."

Prester stood and I introduced him to Emery as a member of the gang for the same purpose that I was a member.

"Lacassagne sent him down to help me," I explained.

"Wish he'd sent some one down to help *me*," was the rueful reply.

Then quite cheerfully:

"But you've got one less bloody devil to fight. When I run into him right near here I didn't know what had happened. He come at me ——itowhitlings. I happened to catch his hand as we bumped—his left hand—and two fingers was lacking, and I knew he was the man who had left the bloody print of his hand on poor Joel Camp's boat.

"I ducked back and swang the old sword. He let out a yell, or started to, and dived at me. I felt the blade hit something, and glory be! I guess that feller was snatched to —— so quick that he thought he'd always lived there."

"Where were you hiding when the gang came here and found the man?"

"Under the bank near my boat. I calc'lated to take 'em one by one if they come down the bank."

"Well, time's up," I said. "We must kill you and be going."

"Kill me?" he dully repeated.

"That's what we were left to do. Then you must steal a canoe and make for Louisville. Tell Lacassagne I'm here as one of the gang; that Prester's with me. Tell him the gang may split and run for it any minute. Say I ask for riflemen to come and help clean them out. Tell him Harpe is one of the leaders and should be dealt with at once and all the men with him."

"But to leave you! I hate like the 'tarnal to do that."

"It's sure death if you're caught here in the morning," warned Prester. "All the settlers here are either afraid of the gang, or members of it. I'll get you some smoked meat and a jug of whisky from our cabin. There's an odd musket or two up there, and you can have one."

"Wal, if I must I s'pose I must. But never mind the gun. The sword——"

"No, no, friend Emery," I interrupted. "I must take the sword with me to prove you're dead."

For a minute the absurd fellow refused to part with the sword. Finally, however, we prevailed on him to see the necessity of our possessing some proof of his demise, especially since the two of us were still on probation. With many groans and laments he surrendered the uncouth weapon to me.

Next we hurried to the cabin where the gang enjoyed its moments of relaxation and procured a quantity of smoked meat, half a bushel of parched corn, a jug, a musket, powder and ball.

A search of the bank revealed an eighteen-foot dugout. Wishing Emery the best of luck and warning him to beware of the Indian Shore, we pushed him off. We were turning away when the sound of his paddle ceased, and his voice softly hailed:

"Oh, Broad! I clean forgot something important. Night's work's been so bedeviling——"

"Spit it out!" I urged.

"You know that ark you sent me to warn?"

I impatiently returned an affirmative.

"Well, the girl, Nancy Summers, was on that."

And his paddle dipped and he was fighting the current.

I stood there paralyzed by the momentous news. My first coherent realization was that only a few rods of water had been between us and I had not sensed her presence. And next: Why was she traveling to the Lower Country? Why hadn't Lacassagne held her?

There was a chance that she had not seen him at Louisville, and yet she had known the important nature of the talk I had sent by her hand and would have made, I believed, every effort to deliver it. But if she had met him I could not understand how a man so astute as the merchant had permitted her to travel down the Ohio. He fully understood the dangers of the river. He should have exerted himself to the utmost to hold her where she would be safe.

I had been so contented in the conviction that he had detained her, won her over by his kindly nature, that I had passed Louisville without landing to make inquiries. My hurt at not seeing her there was purely personal and not touched by any worry for her safety.

Now I stood like a frozen man; and yet my mind was melting with wild conjectures, useless regrets, and terrible fears.

"Come, come, man. Are you asleep?" asked Prester sharply, shaking my arm. "We must start for the cave."

I shook off his hand and opened my mouth to bellow after Emery, but enough common sense remained to remind me of two facts. Emery had probably told all he knew and was deaf to my call by this time; and the girl was down the river and the road to the cave led after her.

I blindly followed my friend down the bank to where the small dugout awaited us. Depositing the sword in the bottom of this, we took the paddles and did our utmost to cover the twenty-five miles as soon as possible. If I worked more desperately than my friend it was because I visualized the slim figure of the girl traveling into the vortex of great danger.

WE LANDED on a shelf of rock a few rods above the mouth of the cave. The sentinel posted there greeted Prester with a surly nod, but barred my way and stared pop-eyed at the burden I carried. Prester vouched for me as being a new member and he allowed us to pass.

The sentinel's post could not be seen from the cave, and it was necessary for us to clamber down a few steps to gain the opening. The water reached nearly to this opening, and our entrance, unheralded, was slightly dramatic.

Several men were sleeping or smoking just inside the mouth. Corkendale was stretched at full length on a bearskin and staring out on the river. From the rear of the cave came the odor of smoke, where, as Prester already had explained, the cooking was done, a rift through the rock serving as a chimney.

I advanced and threw the long sword down by Corkendale's side. He rose to a sitting posture and glared at the sword as if it were something alive and very venomous.

"—— my gizzard! You've done it!" he whispered.

"Caught him by the river-bank," I explained. "He was hiding within a rod of where you found Murty."

"How did you manage it?" he asked, greedy for the details.

"Simple enough. The minute we bumped into him in the dark I used my pistol and Prester used his knife. He never had a chance to use that long sticker."

"Well, I'll be cussed!" mumbled Corkendale, taking the handle in both hands and lifting the weapon. "He had to have some bone and muscle to use this thing. Never seen its like on the Ohio before—nor anywhere else. What did you do with him?"

"Filled his clothes with rocks and dumped him in the river. Murty 'n' him is talking it all over by this time," chuckled Prester.

"Bring out a jug, Finsin," loudly called Corkendale over his shoulder. "Against the rules to drink here except at night when all's safe and snug, but this deserves a wetting-down. I'll admit I got rather keen set about that feller and his way of rushing out of the woods and cutting off folks' heads. Learn who he was?"

"No chance," I said. "He only had time for a few words, and those made me think he was crazy."

Finsin now emerged from the rear of the cave with the jug. Each man took a stiff tot, drinking our good health boisterously and swearing roundly in a vain endeavor to express their opinion of the two-handle sword. Corkendale took off his dram, sent the jug away and praised us, saying:

"Good work. I'll be the making of you. Give me young blood and I'll show you bold blood. That's the kind we need in this business."

After more general talk, with the men willing to pay us homage—Finsin excepted, he being a surly brute—Prester asked—

"Where's Mason?"

"Off on a kill with six men," lightly replied Corkendale. "He spotted the ark that got away from us. Left a note saying he was after it. Oughter be getting back soon. She was heavy loaded and oughter pay well."

My heart drummed in my ears. His cold-blooded manner in speaking of the murder of a boatload of people was most ghastly, but that part of it seemed very remote and impersonal to me.

"Nancy Summers! Nancy Summers!" rang through my head repeatedly. A sad day when I picked her up on Three Islands and ferried her to the Kentucky shore. Each time we had met fate had arranged that our meeting should be stormy. My escape from Harpe and his men, the fight in the hidden cabin, and now this!

I had forced her to go to Louisville against her inclination. I was blood guilty.

The awful horror of my soul must have been reflected in my face, for Prester leaned forward so as to shut me out from Corkendale's gaze and giving me an ugly glance yawned and said:

"We're dead sleepy, partner. What say to turning in?"

Somehow I managed to get to my feet and to stumble after him to the back of the cave, where Finsin's figure was a silhouette against the dull glow of coals. Like the tolling of a bell her name was repeated over and over in my ears as if being shouted by some god across the river. I threw myself on a pile of robes and dug my hands into my eyes; for now the chaos of my grief was giving way to connected thoughts, and each thought became a picture which no darkness could shut out. I saw the helpless ark, the stealthy approach of the pirates, the swarming of the devils over the low bulwarks; then I must have cried out, for Finsin's voice beat in on my intelligence, asking—

"What'n —— is the matter with him?"

"Talking in his sleep," coldly replied Prester. "And never you mind if he does, you squaw cook. Don't git brash with fighting men."

I secured something of a hold on myself and clinched my teeth. The poor child had kissed me good-by in the cabin, and she had not wished to leave me. At that moment—aye, even before—I knew I loved her. But not till now did I realize how much I loved her.

"Look after yourself," sternly whispered Prester. "Change that face and stop that groaning noise. There's always a chance they didn't overtake the ark."

I knew they would overtake the ark. She stood no chance against the pursuit of skilled boatmen in a swift dugout. Yet I clung to Prester's suggestion and held my breath as I waited.

At last Prester shook my arm, thinking I had slept because I was so still, and whispered:

"They're coming! God give them bad luck!"

I found myself on my feet and walking to the mouth of the cave. The six men were climbing from their dugouts directly before the entrance. In the background of the picture framed by the mouth of the cave was a big keelboat passing down-river with all the speed the current and sweeps could give and hugging the Kentucky shore very close.

Corkendale spoke aloud, but his remarks were really his thoughts and not intended to be overheard; for he said:

"That shows the jig is up. They all know we're here. From now on they'll pass at night, or with their guns ready. —— 'em!"

"Hi!" bawled a man standing outside the cave. "They didn't git it!"

And for the first time I realized that the newcomers were morose of countenance and carried no fruits of a raid. My soul seemed to lift me off my feet, and that announcement of failure was the sweetest music I had ever heard.

Corkendale advanced a few steps and called out—

"Where's Mason?"

Mason, who had been standing on the shelf with the sentinel, now climbed down the rocks and entered. He was a short, fat creature with an unusual pallor marking his face, more noticeable in a region where all men are outdoor men and are tanned to the duskiness of Indians. He suggested some night animal, an unclean dweller in dark places.

"What luck, Mason?" harshly demanded Corkendale.

Instead of answering Mason stepped forward and peered up into my face, his eyes blazing.

"Who's this strange bird?" he growled, eying me ferociously, his hand going to an Indian war-ax in his belt.

"New man and a good one. None of that," Corkendale sharply warned him. "Him and Prester did a mighty good job for all of us last night. Tell you about it later. What about the ark?"

MASON began swearing in a voice so low-pitched and monotonous that at a distance of a few feet one might have mistaken his blasphemy for some commonplace recital. Apparently exhausting his evil language, he tersely informed the other—

"Got away."

"Couldn't overhaul 'em, eh?" regretted Corkendale.

"Overhaul ——!" growled Mason. "They rained buckshot at us and——"

"But an ark is so easy to take," broke in Corkendale bitterly.

"Wait till I git through," suggested Mason in an ominous voice. "Those people had a three-pounder and knew how to use it. Come within six inches of blowing my dugout out the water."

There was a dismayed silence of nearly a minute and my soul sang sweet music at the scoundrels' confusion.

"A three-pounder!" gasped Corkendale. "From one of them —— forts probably."

"Most likely," dryly replied Mason. "But it's enough to know that when three-pounders come to the Ohio it's high time we quit."

Corkendale proceeded to curse the boats, the ordnance and the narrow, miserable spirit that prompted such means of self-defense. Obviously he considered it to be something dastardly for a boat's crew to presume resenting having their throats cut. The men listened, no one caring to cut in on his torrent of oaths.

"Game's up round here," he finally declared. "We must strike south and set up a new shop. We must git the stuff old Summers hid and clear out."

"No time to talk about that just now," grunted Mason, casting a side glance at the men. Then in a loud voice:

"If they're going to use three-pounders we must get their boats and one of the guns and use it ourselves. As for shifting quarters, I'll agree to move down-stream so's to be nearer the Mississippi. But if it hadn't been for that gun——"

"Why didn't you send one boat in and make a rush with t'other after they'd fired? Couldn't you close in before they could load it again?"

"Yah!" snarled Mason. "And who's to go in the first boat?"

"Better some risk then to come back empty-handed," was the cold reply.

"Empty-handed? I've turned as much stuff into the gang as you have. Seems to me that next to Harpe you have a soft thing in this gang."

"Don't matter how soft I take it s'long as I get the stuff," said Corkendale in his softest voice.

"It was your idee to have Harpe send the loot down by Hoss Summers. *That* ain't been turned in yet," reminded Mason.

"This is a bad talk for friends," quietly Corkendale warned him.

Mason read the danger signals and said:

"Who says we come back empty-handed? I ain't finished my story yet. I've got something in the little cave overhead."

Saying this, he stepped to the outside ledge and sharply called—

"Come down here."

We all waited expectantly, I with my heart drumming in my ears again. There came the soft sound of light steps on the rocks leading down from the sentinel's post. Next my senses swam in circles, making the water and the forest a blurred mass, while the voices of the men sounded very far off.

As one in a dream I heard Prester at my elbow cry out. For in the mouth of the cave stood Nancy Summers, fresh as a violet, her fair face dimpled with smiles.

"Old Summers' gal!" yelled Finsin, stretching out his hand to stroke her sleek locks.

She wheeled on him lithe as a panther and flashed seven inches of steel before his eyes. He tumbled back. Corkendale sprang at him, struck him with his fist and sent him reeling into the inner darkness.

"Not for common folks, eh?" raged Finsin from the darkness.

"Another word and I shall come in there to see you," warned Corkendale, his face drawn with passion.

"She's my prisoner," warned Mason. "I'll see she isn't troubled any."

"That's a lie. I'm no man's prisoner," the girl quietly informed them. "I came here of my own will. I'll leave when I've finished my errand."

"To be sure," mocked Corkendale, smiling with his thin lips and devouring her with his dull eyes. "Your errand. To be sure. And just what might your errand be, my pretty?"

"To tell you my father is dead," she quietly replied.

"That ain't much," said Corkendale. "We knew that. What do you mean by saying you come here of your own free will?"

Mason spoke up, saying:

"It's true. She was on the ark and quit it while they was using the gun. She came in a little canoe, with the ark folks yelling for her to come back."

"What else brought you here?" asked Corkendale of the girl.

"I'll tell about that later. I'm tired."

I had remained in the background and in the shadows. We must meet some time, so, forcing myself to an appearance of composure, I advanced into the light, Prester keeping at my side.

She gave a little cry. Corkendale and Mason glared about to learn the cause. With a grimace that showed her small teeth she held up a finger from which the blood oozed.

"Pricked it with my knife," she explained. "Now I must be alone and rest."

"Certainly," Corkendale gravely agreed.

Then, snatching the knife from her hand, he added—

"But you mustn't run the risk of cutting your pretty fingers again."

She did not show any resentment at the loss of the knife, but as she backed through the opening to ascend to the chamber over the main cave she tapped the butt of a pistol in her belt and said:

"I hope no one disturbs me. I sleep very light and shoot without asking questions."

"No one will disturb you," growled Mason.

With a bob of her head which included us all she smiled as sweetly as if taking leave of most decent friends and vanished up the rocks to her retreat, from which she could not escape without passing the sentinel. My emotions on beholding her entering the lair of the desperadoes can not be described.

My mind was stupefied. I have no recollections of what thoughts crashed through my dazed brain when I first beheld her. Even after she departed I was far from normal. Prester was worried over my appearance and got me to the rear of the cave on the excuse of finishing our sleep.

"Are you crazy?" he fiercely demanded.

"I think so," I admitted. "Leave me for a bit. Think of a way I can get word to her."

He walked back to the opening and I threw myself on the robes. There was no denying the horrible fact that the girl of her own volition had come to this nefarious den. Mason and Corkendale, as well as Harpe, knew her by sight, thus proving that she had been in their company before when accompanied by her father.

Since my first talk with Corkendale I had known for a certainty that her father was an agent or messenger—perhaps something worse—for the gang. But what madness had sent her here when she did not have even her father's protection? What foolish trust in the two leaders had prompted her to bring the news of her father's death? What perverted sense of loyalty to the miscreants should impel her to such dangerous business?

Of course Prester and I would die fighting in her behalf, but we must be sure that she died first. Death was a great mercy to a woman situated as she was.

OUT of all my mental torment rose one clear dominating thought: I must talk with her. She had been deeply agitated on beholding me, and with the iron nerve of a Seneca had brought blood with her knife to cover up her confusion.

I rose and drew close to the fireplace and secured a piece of charcoal. As I slipped it into my belt-pouch Finsin's voice complained:

"There's some what won't stand for it. Every one's equal here. That's the only thing that's held the gang together. 'Course, we must have leaders, but when it comes to livin' every one's equal."

"Of course. Why not?" I agreed.

"An' you 'low it's goin' to be so now?" he sneered.

"Why not?"

He laughed diabolically.

" 'Cause a young gal puts the devil into a man. If it was gold or rum Mason an' Corkendale would play square. Now both on 'em is plannin' to take this white squaw. First they'll work together to cheat the gang, then they'll fight it out between themselves.

"Best thing for us would be to toss her into the river. 'Course, if they'd shake up some numbers an' let each man draw an' then stand by the bargain——"

How I longed to kill the brute! And yet he was no worse than Mason and Corkendale. No worse? He was in no degree their equal in cruelty and devilishness. He was brutal, ignorant, and hardened to every crime on the list. The two leaders possessed all his bloodthirsty qualities, plus the intelligence to satiate their lusts after the likings of hell.

"Paper?" I said. "If I had some I might make some numbers and have them ready."

"Wait!" he eagerly cried. "I got some books took from boats what I use to start fires with. Awful handy to have. Bare pages in the back of each."

He rummaged around a litter in a corner and at last brought me two blank sheets of paper torn from some volume. I crouched by the fire, and while he was busy with his kettles I took my charcoal and wrote:

> Your father hid a keg of gold jewelry under the cabin where he died. The gang doesn't know where it is, but wants it. Hold your knowledge of it over them to save you from worse than death. If we can gain a little time Prester and I will take you out of this. I know now I've loved you from the very first.

I slipped this under the other sheet and began making numbers as Finsin came and glanced over my shoulder. Finsin nudged me as some one approached. I thrust the paper into my hunting-shirt and walked toward the entrance. The man was Mason. Turning to walk beside me, he remarked—

"You're a funny cuss."

"How?" I indifferently inquired.

"You don't seem to be interested in our new visitor," he chuckled. "All the rest are out of their heads about her."

"What the —— you talking about?" I demanded.

"The girl, you fool. You saw her. You're young. You're not interested."

"I'm young, and I'm going to live to be old; and that's a —— sight more'n the rest of you'll do if you let the sight of a woman knock you off your balance."

"That's the best hoss sense ever spoke in this cave," declared Corkendale, who had overheard my speech. "You'll do well to remember it, Mason. Better cut her throat offhand than to keep her for the men to fight over."

"I'll split the heart of the first one that lays a finger on her."

"Well, well," Corkendale softly reminded him, "we're all partners, you know. Just why you should have your first choice of any loot——"

"I'll put up enough gold to cover her value. And I didn't bring her here because she caught my fancy. She come 'cause she wanted to. Now she's here she must tell about the stuff her paw hid. I ain't spoke to her about it yet, but of course she knows and she must tell. After that we'll see what happens."

Corkendale readily agreed that this was

good reasoning, and suggested that the girl had better remain close in the cave until they had learned the secret of the hidden jewelry. While they were discussing it I walked to the mouth of the cave, where Prester was lounging. I dropped beside him. From the corner of his mouth he said—

"Got your talk ready?"

I nodded.

"Be out front ready to throw it when I kick up a row inside and get their attention."

I yawned and stretched my arms, then felt under my shirt and folded up both sheets of paper. There was no wind and as the small opening of the upper cave was a scant fifteen feet above the mouth of the lower cave I was satisfied that the message did not need to be weighted with pebble or bullet.

I rose, walked out front and stared at the river and the wooded island below. As I stood thus a tiny particle of rock hit my shoulder. I was in a sweat for fear she might seek to communicate with me.

Then from inside the cave came a smashing explosion. With a howl the men at the opening turned to learn the nature of the catastrophe, and the sentinel lost no time in joining them. Prester had given me my chance.

I raised my arm; her dear face showed above. I threw the wad of paper, and at the same moment she tossed a similar wad for me to catch.

Now the men came pouring out of the cave, and Prester was saying—

"That —— fool of a Finsin left a powder-horn where it could fall into the fire."

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST RAID

WHILE the men were clearing their lungs of smoke and cursing Finsin for what was supposed to have been an accident I read Nancy Summers' message. She had written:

> I had to Come. Mikel LaCasagne could not Stop me. When he Found I Would Come he said he would Send men at Once. Dere Lad I could not let you Go to Danger and not Be with you when you Stood by me as you Did. Mabe you Will never git This but it Sofens the ach in my Hart to Write it. I shall Be safe with the River men for a Spell annyway. Long enuff to see You git way up River. I saw Josir Mry at Old Shawnetown but he did not See me. I Knew him by the long sord. I Knew you must Be near. I wanted to go on shorre to find you. Go up River the minnit you Git this. May the good God Help us All. But go way Now.—N. S.

I tore the paper in bits and buried them under the rocks just in time to escape the sharp eyes of Corkendale and Mason, who now joined me. Corkendale was smiling enigmatically and his heavy eyes held new mischief as he declared:

"Here we be, the three of us. Now, Mason, what makes you think this young feller can't be trusted?"

Mason had not expected this as I could see by the wrathful glance he shot at his partner.

"Not just my words, Corkendale," he answered. "I said we shouldn't talk about the gang splitting before any of the men."

"I know; and I said we already had talked mighty free before Mount," Corkendale reminded him.

"Have it so," flared up Mason. "I'll save you the bother of remembering the rest. When you said that, I 'lowed he could be fixed so he wouldn't blab. Now put that in your pipes, the two of you, and smoke it."

I've always held that a man never gains anything by acting moderate when facing a brute. To pass his threat in silence would be encouragement for him to repeat it; and when one has said a thing about so many times he finds himself ripe to put his words into action. So he barely finished speaking before my pistol was poked into his side. With an eye on Corkendale I warned him—

"If that's to be my share I might as well finish you now."

We were standing so close together that none of the men before the cave noticed the little drama.

"Here! Here!" protested Corkendale. "This has gone too far. Quit it, Mount!"

Yet he made no move to interfere.

"Curse you, Corkendale. You want him to do it," choked Mason, standing very quiet.

I stepped from him and stuck my pistol into my belt but kept my hand on it.

"No more talk like that to me," I warned him. "I've proved I ain't afraid of blood; and I won't let no man threaten my life more'n once without going to meet him. You're not dealing with Murty now."

"Corkendale, you wanted him to finish me," Mason hoarsely accused his partner, ignoring me completely.

Corkendale laughed as if vastly amused, and insisted:

"Why, I knew he didn't mean it. What's the matter with you? You ain't hurt any."

"No thanks to you that I ain't dead, I'm thinking," Mason slowly replied.

Then to me:

"Next time I have anything to say about you I'll say it to your face. What I said to Corkendale was my way of speaking, and was meant in a general way. Corkendale didn't oughter 'a' said it."

"That's all right," I assured him. "I ain't looking for unnecessary trouble. But when trouble comes I'll go down fighting, and I'll take some one with me. And that goes for Corkendale and Harpe as well as for you."

"Such a proud-spirited feller!" sneered Corkendale. "Look here, Mason; my medicine is whispering something to me. We all want the trader's girl 'cept this young blood-drinker. Now my medicine whispers that he'll be the one to get her.

"Always works that way. Starving man can't catch any fish. Feller who's et till he has to loosen his belt catches 'em as fast as he drops a line.

"You 'n' me mustn't quarrel, Mason. If we do the first thing we know this feller'll be bossing the gang."

Mason eyed him in sullen silence. He and I had the same thought: Corkendale wished to provoke a fight between the two of us. He believed that the gang was on the point of breaking up, and that it would come to a duel between him and Mason with the girl as the stake. If Mason killed me then Corkendale's chances would be no worse than they were at the start. If I won out he would be rid of his deadliest rival, and this without his having run any risk.

"You're making game of me," I said to him. "I meant just what I said and nothing else; I'm going to keep on living. I ain't adding any woman to the pack I'm already toting. All I ask is that no man goes round saying he's going to kill me. Once for all, this woman business ain't any of my business."

Without removing his gaze from Corkendale's cynical features, Mason gruffly told me:

"There's no quarrel between us. I trust you. I didn't have no call to say what I did. If you hadn't jumped me things would be different. I wouldn't be saying these words, because you wouldn't be here to hear 'em. I'm glad it ain't any worse. Let's let it go at that."

It was plain enough that he considered me as a side issue, but did not believe that he could afford for a minute to be off his guard against his partner. I warmly expressed myself as being pleased; the misunderstanding was cleared up, and I was genuinely pleased to see that our reconciliation put Corkendale in a black mood. But to impress the two of them I was not over-elated at avoiding trouble I insisted—

"There's something that does concern me, and we might as well clear it up now as later."

"What's that?" asked Mason curiously.

"The loot Hoss Summers hid."

"The —— you say!" exclaimed Corkendale; nor was his surprize pretended. "We 'lowed that was collected before you joined us."

"Collected and lost," I reminded him. "If it is collected for the second time it comes as new stuff, and I want my share of it."

Mason swore a lusty oath, then surprized me by declaring that I was right and was entitled to a share. Corkendale was on the point of denying this, then smiled sourly. The tables were reversed; Mason was seeking to precipitate trouble between his partner and me.

He heartily conceded that my view was the correct one, and declared that it served them right for letting the treasure go astray. This led to a suggestion that we learn from the girl where it was concealed.

MASON was as keen as Corkendale to get this knowledge, but both were unwilling that any of the gang should share in it. This brought up the question as to how the loot should be recovered. I enlarged my demands by insisting that Prester should have a share in the division.

I offered to go and get it, knowing that neither would trust any agent after their experience with Hoss Summers. They smiled at my offer, and I urged the two of them to draw lots to see who should take a man of the other's choosing and go after it. This did not appeal to them.

"Perhaps we're getting ahead too fast,"

I said. "Suppose we first find out if the girl knows anything about it."

"Just a moment," requested Corkendale most politely. "Why would you bring this feller Prester into it and make it four instead of three shares?"

"There are two of you. I think Prester will stand by me—at least until the division is made. He's the only man I'll take a chance with."

They stared at me silently for a few moments, murder showing in each face. Mason was the first to speak; he urged—

"Let's have the girl down here and question her."

Corkendale and I nodded our willingness, and Mason told the sentinel to call the girl. She promptly came down the rocks, saucy of smile and apparently as unconcerned as she would be in Michael Lacassagne's home. There was no recognition in the glance she gave me, but she placed her hand at the breast of her hunting-shirt and I believed that my note was hidden there.

Corkendale's gaze was ghastly as he stared at her, his reptilian eyes never shifting from her animated face. Mason had himself under better control; he was the one to inform her of our business with her.

"Your father was given some gold by Harpe," he began.

"I know. A keg of gold," she readily admitted.

Mason sucked in his breath sharply and murmured—

"Do you know where that keg is now?"

She stared at him in mild surprize; then smiled in amusement.

"Would I dare come here if I didn't?" she retorted.

"You're safe here, my pretty," said Corkendale with a smirk.

"If you knew where it was why did you come here at all?" demanded Mason. "Why didn't you go and get it?"

"Because it's up in the Indian country and I don't dare go alone," was the prompt reply.

"Just where is it?" Mason asked.

She smiled on him without deigning to answer.

"You refuse to tell?" he gritted.

"I'm not crazy," she replied.

"We can make you tell," he warned her.

She shook her head, still smiling.

"I'll kill myself first. I'll kill myself if any harm is offered me."

She meant it. The three of us could see that.

Corkendale's lips drew down at the corners. If it came to a fight for the girl and he won, it must be after the gold was recovered, else he would never see it.

Mason next inquired—

"Will you lead three of us to the place?"

"Four," I said.

He frowned, but allowed the correction to stand. She pondered thoughtfully and confessed:

"I'm sorry I came here. I don't like it. I supposed I'd be safe. I feel I'm a prisoner. I won't lead you to the keg of gold until I'm sure no harm will come to me. Who are the four?"

Corkendale pointed to Prester, who was loudly arguing some point with the men at the mouth of the cave, then indicated the three of us. She slowly decided: "I think I'd rather lead four than one or two. Yes, I'll do it. That will make five shares."

"How much is the keg worth, do you think?" hungrily asked Mason, who was the merchant of the three leaders.

She pursed her red lips, and after a moment estimated—

"At least twenty thousand dollars."

She had named a figure that would appeal. As a matter of fact even my hasty examination of the keg had convinced me that after being melted down the stuff would not be worth a thousand dollars.

If Harpe had ever collected any such sum as she named he had never started it down-river. If the two had not been gold-mad they might have surmised as much. They had had no way of checking up Harpe's various hauls; and of course there was always the possibility of the trader having tapped the up-river man's secret hoard.

Their eyes glistened. They were each counting on obtaining all of it, plus the girl. Corkendale gaily said—

"That would make four thousand apiece—five shares."

"What about the rest of the men?" she innocently asked.

"What they don't know won't hurt 'em," was Mason's blunt retort. "There's enough other stuff for them to divide up."

"Well, I came here to get help," she said with a toss of her pretty head. "We'll start when you say—and five of us are a plenty to pass through the country without stirring up the Shawnees. I want to get away from here. When can we start?"

The leaders did not trust each other, and neither trusted me. Mason puckered his lips thoughtfully, then said:

"It ain't so easy to git clear without having the gang on our backs. We'll have to do some figgering. We'll talk it over tonight. Perhaps we can start tomorrow."

She nodded acquiesence, but warned them:

"I have a pistol in the cave and one in my belt. I'll use one on the first man that tries to get into the cave. The other is for myself. Better see that I am well protected."

"Make it tonight," I whispered to Mason. "If she shoots herself we're out the twenty thousand. And the men can't be held in control."

Mason and Corkendale measured glances, then exchanged nods, and the girl was allowed to ascend the rocks after having been warned to be in readiness to depart at any minute of the night. We returned to the cave, now clear of the smoke, and found ourselves suspiciously scrutinized by the men.

The time had not yet come when the gang dared to violate discipline, although Finsin cursed under his breath all the time he was cooking the rations in the damaged fireplace. I lost no time in informing Prester of our arrangement, and he muttered—

"Now I'm going to take a full breath—the first since I got into this mess."

SOME of the men endeavored to pump me, but I told them we were trying to learn how much treasure Harpe was holding. I also warned them that the girl would tell us nothing if she were molested. They had to be contented with this. The sun sank with every member of the gang nursing suspicions.

After we had eaten it became obvious that the four of us would have difficulty in leaving the cave without the gang taking alarm lest we were deserting. Once this notion was firmly fixed inside their thick skulls there would be no need for the Kentucky men to clean out the nest; they would exterminate each other.

Corkendale was for defying them, for facing them down, but Mason used his head and unfolded a plan that I believed would be as effective as it was simple. He briefly outlined it. Then he stormed into the cave, roundly declaring that he was tired of inaction and of being cooped up in the rendezvous. He was going to take the men who pursued the ark and go to Old Shawneetown and clear the cobwebs from his brain.

The fact that this purpose was contrary to his usual custom of sticking close to the cave did not seem to impress the gang as being peculiar; by their logic the longer a man remained away from the jug the more inclined he should be to visit it. Corkendale emphatically declared that if Mason went with a portion of the men he should go with the others.

This was my cue, and I asked—

"What about the girl?"

"We'll take her along. She ain't above keeping us company," said Mason.

And in this fashion did we manage to quit the cave and advance upon our journey without having the men at our throats.

The dugouts traveled in close formation. Besides myself, Prester, Corkendale and Mason were in the canoe containing the girl. Our plan was to steal away from Shawneetown once the drinking-bout was well under way. The moon was high and flooding the river; the men were impatient to be at the liquor and unbridled license, and they worked right willingly till the night was well spent.

Toward morning we drew ashore, ate some cooked meat and snatched two hours' sleep. Prester and I had hoped that during this halt we could get the girl away, but Mason stationed guards and vowed his intention of keeping awake.

As the girl had slept nearly all the journey she now leaned against a tree with the two pistols in her lap and assured Prester and me that she would arouse us at the first symptom of danger. There was no chance of harm coming to her, however, as Mason's reason for staying awake was to see that she was not annoyed and thus spoil our chances of recovering the keg of gold.

Two hours' sleep for those who wanted it and we were off again. We had covered some five miles from the halting-place and were making slow progress by pulling ourselves along by the overhanging bushes when we sighted a man in a small canoe paddling smartly in mid-stream. He saw us as soon as we saw him and waved his hat in a peculiar manner.

Mason stood up and returned the signal,

whereat the fellow veered sharply and came toward us. Mason shaded his eyes and announced—

"It's Diltin."

"Who's he?" I asked.

"Our lookout man at Shawneetown. Something's busted loose to send him down-river."

We swung outside the flotilla. Diltin dashed in alongside, caught our canoe and hurriedly gave us news that caused the girl to droop her head and pressed Prester and me hard not to show concern. For he had to say:

"Harpe's at Old Shawneetown. Got in yesterday morning. Drunk ever since. Swears he's going to kill Mason."

"We'll go back. We'll meet him in the cave," cried Corkendale.

"We'll go ahead," growled Mason.

If ever I was in doubt as to who was the leader of the gang I was now to learn that it was Mason.

"Fall in behind us, Diltin. You done good work. Go ahead, boys. We'll mix up Harpe's dose at the settlement."

"We'll turn back," growled Corkendale, wheeling and glaring at Mason.

Mason's hand was inside the boat and not to be seen by the men. He sat behind Corkendale and was now covering him with his pistol. Corkendale gave one glance at the pistol and resumed his paddling. Mason asked Diltin how many men were with Harpe and was informed that there were seven besides three slaves.

"Then he's been run out the Upper Country," gritted Mason. "Could only fetch three of his slaves along. It looks bad—for Harpe."

The girl was behind me, between me and Prester. Over my shoulder came her voice in the faintest of whispers, warning me—

"We must get away before we reach the settlement."

I bowed my head to show that I realized this was our only chance. But how to separate from three other dugouts, especially while the two leaders were with us to resist?

My worrying over this problem was interrupted by a cry from Finsin, who was in the head dugout. His crew had ceased paddling; he was on his feet gesticulating excitedly to us and pointing up the river. Then we all saw it—two flats and a keelboat lashed together and just rounding a bend.

"By——!" cried Corkendale. "It may be our last big prize on the Ohio. What say, lads? Shall we take 'em and drink afterward?"

All voiced their approval, the blood-lust being in the ascendency. Mason warned:

"We can't lose no time in reaching Harpe. If he's been run out the country he must have all his gold with him."

But the fleet swung in toward our side of the river, and Corkendale insisted:

"Just the boats we need in making the Mississippi. We'll tie 'em up along here and come back to 'em when we've finished with Harpe."

"They must be making their first trip, and they couldn't 'a' stopped to learn any of the river talk," mused Mason. "Well, so long as they oblige us by coming to us we'll accommodate 'em. See to your guns, boys, but keep 'em out of sight."

THE fools were committing suicide by hugging the Indian Shore as they did. We could see figures of men and women dancing, and soon heard their voices singing. The old story of lambs gamboling into the jaws of the wolf. The girl caught my hand and gave it a squeeze, and I heard her moaning at what she soon must witness.

We held our place by grasping the bushes. My mind was paralyzed; I was unable to resume thinking until Finsin smacked his lips and softly cried—

"There's women on board!"

"She's mighty green to the river," chuckled Corkendale.

Then to some of the men:

"You fools! Keep those guns out of sight. Time enough for that when we give the word."

The three boats were now closing down on us rapidly and swinging out into the current to avoid hitting us. A dozen, including several women, were now waving their hands to us.

I felt the girl's warm breath on my neck and her agonized voice was pleading:

"Warn them! Warn them!"

Of course Prester and I would have done this had she not been there. I believed I could get her ashore, where we would be safe, during the confusion of the attack. And yet it was a horrible choice.

Mason suddenly called out:

"Keep quiet till we git aboard. We'll use this boat as a decoy. They won't suspect nothing now they've seen the girl. Prester, stick your knife into her if she makes a yelp."

And our dugout turned toward the victims with Mason and Corkendale paddling.

Again her breath was on my neck, but this time she softly cautioned—

"Wait."

Seeing us coming toward them, the men manipulated the long sweep and slowly swung in to meet us. We were half-way between the boats and the gang when I learned the reason of the girl's desire that I should make no move. For now she was on her feet, frantically screaming:

"Keep away! Keep away! These are river-pirates!"

With a shrill howl of rage Mason wheeled and struck at her with his paddle. Having no time to pull a weapon, I drove my fist against his jaw and sent him half-over the side of the canoe. I had barely delivered the blow before Corkendale had whipped out his pistol and was aiming at the girl.

I heard her drop as Prester pulled her down, and Prester's ax flashed over my shoulder. Corkendale fired wild and ducked to dodge the ax. He succeeded, but his weight, added to that of Mason, capsized the canoe.

As I went under I tried to locate her, and her small hand struck me in the face. She was swimming, and I followed her. We came to the surface within ten feet of each other. I saw that she was thoroughly at home.

I glanced back and beheld Prester's face a rod behind. He was grinning broadly and spurting a mouthful of the Ohio ahead of him as he came.

Two heads back of him and moving toward the shore would be Mason and Corkendale.

Coming to meet them, and then to capture the fleet, were the dugouts. The distance to the fleet was too great for us to make before the dugouts would overtake us. Even if we made it we would soon be captured, for our weapons were at the bottom of the Ohio.

"Down-stream!" I yelled to the girl. "We must get back to the shore."

She turned to obey me. A sheet of flame and a thunderous report from the fleet caused me to tread water and gape in amazement. Men, many of them, were now on the flats and the keelboat. They were pouring volley after volley into the dugouts. They were shooting from the cabin windows as well as from the decks; and although fighting back desperately as they tried to make the shore the pirates were withering away.

"Kentucky riflemen! Lacassagne's men!" screamed Nancy, kicking ahead at a pace that had me hard put to match.

Prester came alongside of me, choking convulsively because his joy had permitted him to forget that one can not laugh with his face in the Ohio.

As we passed around the stern and caught a rope flung from the keelboat it was Emery's hand that pulled us aboard. His first query, shouted in stentorian voice, was if we were hurt. His second was—

"Where is that sword?"

By the time we had gained the deck the fight was over. The dugouts floated down the river half-filled with the dead. Over the side of one hung Finsin.

Emery presented me to the leader of the decoy fleet, a young man by the name of Joyce, who said it was Lacassagne that was responsible for the expedition. The expedition had been planned for some time; but it was an atrocious murder at Harpe's tavern, resulting in Harpe and his men fleeing the country, that forced the issue.

"Then this young woman disappeared and Mr. Lacassagne was afeared she'd gone crazy an' gone down the river, an' that settled it. We rigged up these boats. Some o' the boys played off at bein' gals, an' we sung an' danced for the benefit of every suspicious-lookin' boat we could sight till we struck Shawneetown."

"Harpe? Was he there?" I eagerly asked.

"Yes; an' we killed most of his men. He got away."

"Did you get the two men in the water, the two who were in our canoe?" I cried, pointing toward the shore.

He shook his head.

"There seemed to be some sort of a mix-up after the young woman yelled at us. Some of you seemed to be tryin' to protect her, some seemed tryin' to hurt her, but dad-blamed if we could see which was her friends an' which wasn't. Then we was all took up shootin' at them in the dugouts.

"By the time we could give any heed to you folks there was two men climbing up the bank. Sorry. Was they much account?"

"They'd be very important in ——," I sadly informed Emery.

But if Mason and Corkendale and Harpe had escaped, their gang was smashed and the days of river-pirates were ended on the Pleasant Ohio; and the girl was somewhere below, and I had hardly exchanged a word with her. I descended and found her disconsolately curled up by a window, her wet curls plastered close about her small head, her dark eyes very mournful. She rose and stared at me steadily as I approached her.

"You read my message?" was my inane query.

She nodded and tried to smile. The tears came instead.

"Then you know I love you," I told her. "And that's all that matters."

I would have taken her in my arms, but she gently repulsed me, correcting:

"There's something else that matters. Matters much."

Nonplused, and with my heart in my moccasins, I waited stupidly for an age; then she explained:

"It's whether I love you or not. You forgot that, didn't you?"

"I forgot to ask that. No need now," I said; for there was a touch of something in her curt tone that suggested malice.

I turned; and the next moment her arms were about my neck and her warm lips were against mine, and the eyes that I looked down into were filled with mischief, and with something else infinitely more tender. In another moment she was sobbing against my shoulder and calling me her "dear lad;" and I knew that all was well on the Ohio.

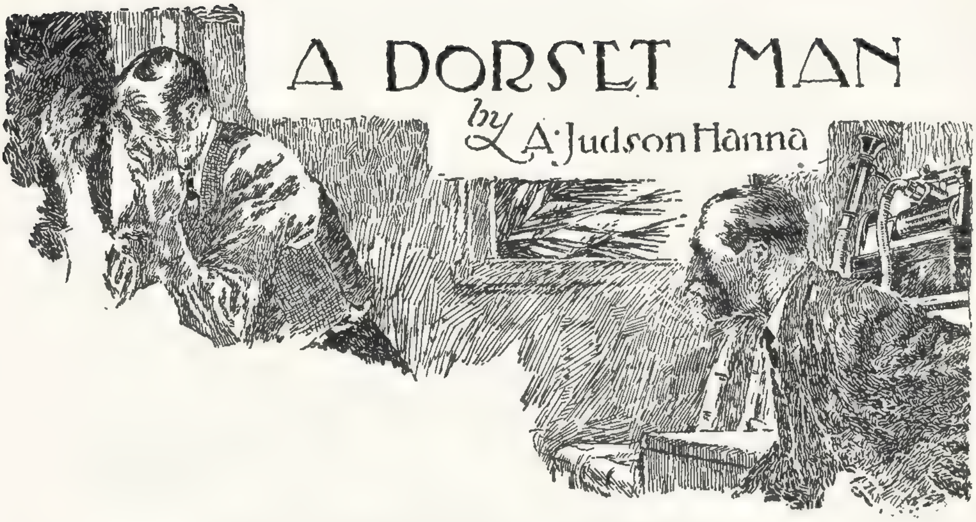
My special mission ended with the destruction or flight of the pirates. If I got much credit for it it was more than I deserved, I think. If I won a wife, certainly it was more than I deserved, and it always amused her to have me declare as much.

If we who worked for law and order on the Ohio were disappointed over the escape of the three leaders of the gang, there was to come a time, and that soon, when that defect was remedied. And it was in this way that justice worked itself on the three arch-scoundrels. The three leaders transferred their activities to northern Mississippi and southern Tennessee, and killed and robbed with all their old-time abandon.

The Governor of Mississippi Territory was something of a humorist in a grim way. He offered a reward for Mason's head. Harpe and Corkendale, never reluctant to turn a penny, killed their comrade and took his head to Natchez. The reward was paid over to them; then they were arrested, tried and hanged. As they left no relatives the reward automatically returned to the treasury of the Territory.

AGAIN, years after, I sailed down the Ohio in the Autumn of the year and found the glories of the Painted Moon much like those of the olden days. Many clearings had shortened the forest line, and except at night it was a strange river to me; a new river. But with the going-down of the sun, with the dusk blotting out the scars left by civilization, the illusion came back.

I wondered at the pilot's foolhardiness in shaving the Indian Shore so closely. I listened for voices below the bend, and they came to me, finding their way up through the years to speak to me in song and the river argot of long ago. And her voice was the first to come, calling me her "dear lad."



A DORSET MAN

by A. Judson Hanna

Author of "Somewhere in France," "O, Adventurers," etc.

"ALL right on the corpse, there. Heave aloft!"

The voice that floated up the side of the steamer to us sounded infinitely weary, like that of a man who has sat up all night in a railway station waiting for a train and, looking at his watch, finds that he has still some hours more to do.

"Hi say there, on deck. Heave away! This ain't no bloomink Tilbury tender."

There was more animation in the voice now and I was able to place its owner, the boatswain, by his peculiar drawling intonation. Peters, who sat with me outside the first officer's door, paused in what he was saying to watch a coffin swing up the side of the steamer to be lowered, none too gently, on the deck. After a moment he said—

"Ever been in Dorset?"

"No," I replied. "But why do you ask that—now?"

"That bosun is from Dorset. He's in a tantrum to get home and every trifling delay drives him into a fury. You wouldn't think, maybe, to hear him now that he is boiling with rage. But I say he is. Tell me, why is it that Dorset people are always in such a rush to get home?"

"I didn't know they were," I replied tamely. "How do you account for it?"

"Well, it can't be the homes. Homes are pretty much alike everywhere and homes are not always pleasant places to go. I have a friend—assistant engineer—who comes from Dorset and he and his wife fight every blessed minute he's ashore. He's trying to divorce her. Yet the moment his ship starts for home, he's all in a fever of excitement to get back there to Dorset.

"Why is it? I can't say. Maybe it's something in the air, or the sunlight, or the growing things—the fields, and hedges and downs—with running brooks, and ivy-hung mills and old stone bridges, so old that moss covers them like bark.

"I've tried to answer that question myself. I asked our boatswain once. Here is his reply:

" 'Why am I in a hurry to get back to Dorset? Lor', sir, because it's Dorset.' And there you are."

We were silent for a minute. Then Peters went on:

"There was a Dorset man back there on Langey Island. Perhaps you would like to hear about him. Only in his case, Dorset meant a girl, as well as that indefinable something we have been considering.

"You know Langey Island? It's the jumping-off place of the Borneo Archipelago, which means the jumping-off place of the world. All they produce there is mats—mats made from palm-fiber, finely woven and exquisitely colored. There's a choice market for them in Europe, consequently a flourishing trading-post on Langey. That's all, just the post, two or three native villages, the usual strip of beach, and the world-old jungle. Heat and insects and all that, you know, but not a bad place at all, so they tell me, the white men who stay there. In fact, it has its virtues as you shall see.

"The man I am going to tell you about—Twombly was his name—was possessed with the desire to return to Dorset. The thing was with him every waking minute. And I imagine that, sleeping, he was roaming the Dorset downs, or sitting in some Dorset dooryard with the girl. He lived in a state of glorious anticipation. Never knew a fellow to be so wrapped up in one idea. And I think he would have felt pretty much the same about it if there hadn't been any girl in Dorset."

"Is he really going back?" I asked.

"Yes, he's going back some day."

I saw Peters smiling at the shore lights, as he repeated slowly:

"Oh yes, he's going back. But I'm wondering if Dorset will be the same to him now. And the girl—will she mean as much to him? Maybe the girl will be disappointed in him."

"He has changed, then. Much?"

"Rather— There was Carlson, the manager; and this Dorset man—Twombly, I said his name was—who was Carlson's assistant. I met him a matter of eight months ago when I sold that talking-machine to Carlson. Yes, I wondered then why Carlson humored him. Twombly was a dreamer. He wasn't a worker. And what Carlson needed more than anything else was a man to take hold of things and keep them moving. Carlson was always busy on the outside. He had no time for bookkeeping, and no taste for it either, I imagine. Twombly was supposed to look after the books and keep up the correspondence but he did neither.

"I asked Carlson once, 'Why don't you send him packing, and get a man who will really help you?'

"The big Swede looked positively shocked, as if I had proposed something criminal, you know.

" 'I can't,' he said. 'Twombly isn't fit to go home. He's better now than when he come here, but not a well man yet.'

" 'Do you mean to tell me that any man can thrive in this purgatorial climate?' I asked Carlson.

" 'Twombly does,' the Swede replied. 'I can't say how. I only know somethings is wrong with him—heart, liver, kidneys, yes? Everything's wrong. But this climate, it improves him. He was a wreck when he comes. I thought he would live, maybe, three months. You see him now. Not well and strong—by no means—but better. Yes, much better.'

" 'How long will it require to rehabilitate him completely?' I asked.

" 'Who knows? He says it will be another year yet. But it would be cruel to send him back now. That girl, you know— He must be fully well before he sees her again.' So Carlson kept him on."

PETERS laughed again softly.

"That talking-machine. I sold it to Carlson on the book. I had never sold one before and I never expect to sell another in this part of the world. Carlson would buy it. Had no more use for it than I have right here in the Celebes Sea for fur mittens and an ulster.

"It was one of those machines that busy men dictate their correspondence into. I tell you, it was in my book—picture, directions, and all. And Carlson took it into his head that he must have one.

"Now I had been trying to sell Carlson a line of goods he had little use for and when I realized that I was wasting my time I made ready to pull stakes. But Carlson wouldn't have it that way. In fact, he was quite distressed. He seemed to take it as a sort of personal favor, my going away down there to sell him, a favor to be returned in kind. So when I made ready to go he was quite upset about it.

" 'My —— no!' he said one afternoon. 'You shall not go. You come down here to sell goods, yes? Now I have been looking over your book and I see somethings I want to buy. For myself, you understand; not for my blacks. It is that talk machine.'

"Well, I laughed right out," Peters continued. "It was so monstrously funny to me. Why, they hadn't even a typewriter there. I tried to imagine big Carlson bellowing into that machine, and later, that saturnine Twombly taking down in painful longhand what the disk had recorded.

"Carlson laughed too. He knew what was running in my mind. But he didn't take offense. There was a man for you—Carlson. But he opened a little safe he had and pulled out a sheaf of bank-notes and counted out the price, and said:

" 'There, my friend. Send me one of those talk machine.'

“ ‘But what will you do with it?’ I asked.

“ ‘I have already a plan for it. I am very forgetful. I think of things I must do and tomorrow—*whiff!* I have forget. I shall talk them into that machine of yours.’

“ ‘But see here,’ I remonstrated, ‘when you think of something you should do, why don’t you put it down on a slip of paper? Then you can look at the paper any time and see it.’

“ ‘Already I try that,’ he said. ‘It is no good. I forget to look at the paper. What then? I have forget those things. So I will connect this talk machine to a clock and every day when I sit down by my lunch the machine will begin to say the things I must get done as soon as I finish by my eating.

“ ‘Now,’ he says, “you come down here to sell goods. You have sold a talk machine. You can stay another week, yes?’

“Well, we laughed a great deal about that talking-machine, Carlson and I, and his new use for it, and he was very sure he could make a clock-connection that would operate. He was something of a genius, it seemed, with tools and wheels and springs and the like.

“ ‘Besides,’ he said frequently, ‘it will give my office a business-like air. I have not even a swivel-chair, as you see. Maybe you could send me it, a swivel-chair, yes?’

“I said I could, and would, if he would keep his money in his pocket.”

“And Twombly, all this time,” I asked. “Was he interested in the talking-machine?”

“He seemed bored with the whole thing. And supercilious. He had a patronizing way with Carlson that angered me more than once. Carlson, remember, was the benefactor, yet Twombly affected to humor him. That seemed to be his attitude in the affair of the talking-machine. If the Swede must have the toy, let him have it, but make charitable allowances for his foible.

“Yet Twombly interested me, always harping on Dorset and his homegoing. In a year, he said, he would be well enough to go back. Langey Island had done wonders for him. It would complete the restoration of his health. And the girl in Dorset—she was waiting for him but would not listen to his going back to her till he was fully well.

“The girl in Dorset! I heard that phrase a score of times a day. He never told us her name. That was all he called her—the girl in Dorset. Not even where she lived in Dorset. I had a feeling that he was unreasonably jealous of Carlson and me, fearing we would take the girl from him. He had praised her to the skies. What more natural, he might say to himself, than that the Swede or I might beat him to it? So he never told us her name, nor in what village she lived in Dorset.

“ ‘And you will not come back to Langey?’ I asked one day.

“ ‘Never. Once I am cured here, I shall always be cured. I know that. The girl in Dorset, she knows it, too,’ he replied.

“After that I said to Carlson—

“ ‘Are you going to put up with that worthless truck for a whole year?’

“ ‘I must. I shall give him his chance, yes? To send him back now—I might as well kill him before he goes. He might never be worse in England but always he would think he is, and it’s what people thinks that counts.’

“Well, I went away, promising the Swede to get him his talk machine as soon as possible. By that time he was all fussed up over it—crazy to experiment with his clock-attachment. Twombly came on board to see me off. He was as morose as ever. Peculiar chap. Even when he enthused about going back to Dorset, he was saturnine—gloomy.

“ ‘If I come back within the year,’ I said, ‘I presume I shall find you here?’

“ ‘You’ll find me here,” he answered solemnly. ‘Oh yes, you’ll find me here.’

“Then he sort of caught himself, and looked sharply at Carlson. The Swede caught the look.

“ ‘Of course you’ll find him here. Why not? Of course, of course. Within the year, yes. Twombly must stay till the cure is complete. His girl, you know—’ Carlson paused to chuckle audibly— ‘the girl in Dorset, she has ordered it.’ ”

WE WERE casting off now and the confusion on deck made conversation difficult. Peters got up and we leaned on the rail a while and had a drink of something cooling and he broke his narrative to say:

“I was here in this very port of Piedmont a few weeks ago. Then—but I don’t think I’ll come this way again. Things have changed for me. We’re only two hundred miles from Langey here. A hundred, say, if it weren’t for the ruck of little islands a steamer must dodge. No, I think I’ll not be in these parts again—not soon at any rate."

When we had cleared the little harbor, we returned to our deck-chairs and Peters picked up his tale without prompting.

"As I was saying, I found myself here at Piedmont a few weeks ago. That was all of five months after I had visited Carlson. I found that a schooner was going out to Langey in the morning. I got passage. You see, I was thinking about Carlson and his talking-machine and was as keen about it as he had been. Had he made the clock connection? Did he actually sit at luncheon and hear his own voice telling him what he must do that afternoon?

"I couldn't spare the time to go to Langey. I shouldn't have gone at all. Nevertheless, I shall never regret my going, because things were not well with Carlson. The big Swede was dead even before I got there. Died, I should say, not six hours before I arrived.

"Twombly saw the schooner coming in and was on the beach to meet me. He couldn't have known I was coming. Maybe it was his custom to meet vessels putting in there. I don't know. I had scarcely shaken hands with him when he blurted out—

" 'I say, Mr. Carlson is dead, you know.'

"I said I didn't know at all. And that was all for a moment. I was inexpressibly shocked. I had known Carlson only a few weeks but I loved him.

" 'Dead!' I said finally.

" 'Today. It was very sudden. I—I think he was poisoned,' Twombly said.

" 'What makes you think that?'

" 'It was so sudden. Last evening he was well. This morning he was very ill—unconscious. Then his face puffed up, and —well, he died.'

" 'But who would poison Carlson?'

" 'I have only my suspicions. The blacks —he had some trouble—a witch-doctor. He made our men stop work.'

" 'The witch-doctor?'

" 'Yes, the witch-doctor. Then Mr. Carlson threatened to flog him. After that, Mr. Carlson died. That is all I know. Oh yes, I saw the witch-doctor giving something to the boy who cooked for us. I didn't think anything of it at the time. Maybe it was the poison.'

" 'You have questioned the boy?'

" 'No. I have been too upset. I can't tell you, Mr. Peters, how upset I am. It's like—like losing everything. Mr. Carlson, he was like a brother—more, he was a protector. I came here a stranger—sick. I was afraid—afraid of everything. But I never feared after I came to know him. If you had not come, I should have gone crazy. And I could do nothing to help him. That was the hardest. After all he had done for me, I could do nothing.'

He was becoming hysterical, and I had to stop him.

" 'Yes, yes, Mr. Carlson was a prince among men. I understand how you feel. Well, we'll go into this matter thoroughly. If he was poisoned, some one must suffer for it.' "

Peters paused, to go on in a moment with an even voice:

"I shall not say much about poor Carlson. He must have suffered agonies. We buried him that evening and Twombly wept quietly while I filled in the grave. The blacks had fled, leaving everything to us; and the assistant, as usual, was good for nothing.

"Then I determined to examine the cook-boy but he had gone with the others. Twombly said they would return soon. They feared the corpse. When they learned that Carlson was buried, they would be back. I had to be satisfied with that.

"We sat up rather late. I wanted to talk about Carlson but I found it wouldn't do with Twombly. So we gossiped about the outside and trade and one thing or another and it got to be well toward morning.

"Finally I got up and touched the talking-machine—we had been sitting in Carlson's queer office—and asked—

" 'Did Carlson really get this to going, the way he planned?'

"Twombly's manner changed instantly. He darted a malevolent look at the machine and after a little hesitation answered almost sourly:

" 'He acted like a child with that thing. Oh Mr. Peters, why did you ever send it?'

"I was so surprized that for a moment I said nothing. I was trying to figure out why Twombly hated that innocent bit of mechanism. Was he jealous of that inanimate thing?

"Twombly's voice interrupted my thoughts.

" 'He was talking into that silly thing just before he died—always telling it things so he could listen to it when he ate. But even he got tired of it sometimes. Sitting at tiffin he would say, "To ——" and get up and shut it off. But always he went back to it.'

" 'What was he saying in it today?' I asked.

" 'I don't know. He sent me to look for a ship. When I got back, he was on the bed, dying.'

"I WANTED to hear Carlson's voice again, so I wound the spring and set the needle. After a momentary whir I was startled by hearing my own name.

" 'Mr. Peters, Twombly has done this. It was all so needless. I was not going to send him home. No, no. I was not——'

"Twombly sprang from his chair. He seemed dazed, rather than desperate, and when I ordered him sternly to sit down, he did so at once.

" 'We may as well hear it all now,' I said. 'You will be compelled to, sooner or later. Afterwards I will hear what you have to say.' He acquiesced with a slight nod of the head. The machine had finally stopped. I had caught nothing but the first few words. Now I lifted back the needle and dropped it almost at random.

" '—not going to send him home. No, no. I was not distinctly. I had engaged another young man, yes, to come out here, because there was so much of the work for me. But I was not going to send him home, not before his year it was up. But Twombly he would not believe it so, and he has killed me.'

"There was a short break, and then Carlson's voice went on, more hurriedly—

" 'With me out of the way, he thinks, it will be six month maybe, before another manager comes out, yes, and maybe he can keep on as manager himself yet.

" 'The poison—two week ago I suffer like this, only not so bad—no, not so bad. The other time I do not know why I am sick. Now I know, yes. You say, Mr. Peters, that you come here soon again. Maybe you try my talk machine and listen this. I can not leave writing. He would destroy. I can not say more.'

"Like a spring that is suddenly released, Twombly shot from his chair and dashed from the room. I did not try to detain him. I was too horrified. I could not believe he was such an arch-fiend. I had to think it all out slowly, for there must be no mistakes now.

"For half an hour, probably, I sat there, trying to realize this outrageous tragedy. Here was big, sweet-hearted Carlson, one of God's useful creatures, who had probably never wronged a man wittingly, done foully to death by a mean-spirited gnome of a man who probably never had a thought beyond his own comfort. I rebelled against Fate at the thought. And the duplicity of the gnome. Blubbering about Carlson's goodness to him, all the time knowing he had done to death his best friend.

"But how stupid of him to have overlooked the possibilities of the talking-machine. Carlson talked into it every day. He talked into it just before he died. But Twombly was so sure of his position that nothing seemed suspicious to him, not even the chatter of a doomed man into a talking-machine. Twombly was clever but not clever enough. The greatest of criminals almost invariably slip up somewhere and more often they slip up on some trifling detail like this of the phonograph.

"I ran over the record once again to make doubly certain of each little word. Then I went out to look for Twombly."

Peters paused and a sailor came up to him; the bosun who lived in Dorset.

"My respects, sir," he said. "You told me to let you know where we stowed the coffin." He added some words and I heard Peters say:

"By the way, bosun, he was a Dorset man, too. Going home, he is."

I hadn't meant Peters to know I had been listening but I could not suppress an exclamation. "You don't mean to say—" I began.

"Exactly. It was Twombly you saw lifted over the side a while back. Unfortunately for him, he missed me. He fired first, you see. Yes, I'm taking him home to Dorset. He pleaded so hard for it before he died. Couldn't lie in peace anywhere but in Dorset, he said. He was a bad egg, but I couldn't deny him that, even though it meant sitting there on Langey three tortured weeks while they mummified him. If he had shot poor Carlson cleanly, I could think better of him, however."

"So you are taking him home. What shall you say?" I asked.

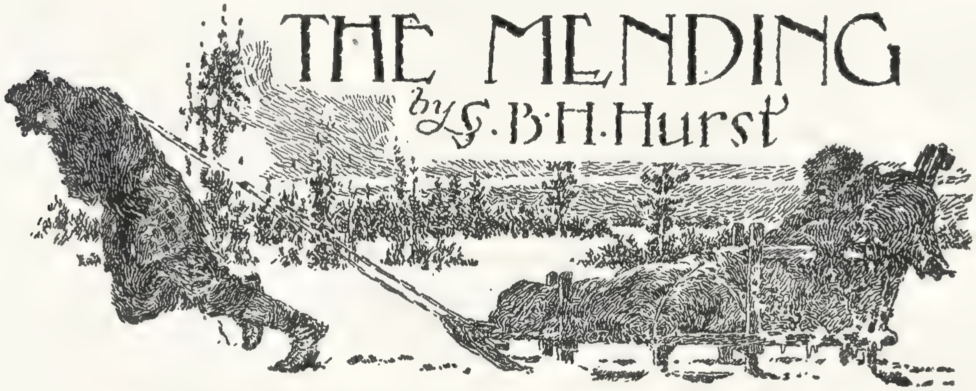
"Oh, the conventional thing—a snake-bite. Men do die of snake-bites in Borneo, you know. But let me tell you, after looking over Twombly's things—I had to do that more or less—I imagine the girl in Dorset isn't going to take on so badly. Two years ago her letters were fervent. They had cooled gradually. Acting as Twombly's next of kin, I read them all. In fact, I think she'll be rather relieved. And I for one shall not blame her a bit. Of course she'll do the right thing—weeds for six months, and all that—and then, probably, marry some hearty Dorset man and forget the invalid on Langey. But Twombly—I doubt if he ever realized how differently she felt toward him. Such self-centered fools are apt to be a bit blind, you know.

"So Twombly is to lie in Dorset under the roses. But I don't believe the girl in Dorset would recognize him now, if she were to see him, which she shall not, if I have my say.

"Well, once a Dorset man, always a Dorset man. There's that bosun now——"

THE MENDING

by S. B. H. Hurst



Author of "The Second Fall," "The Pa-Adventures of a Prophet," etc.

BARNEY HILLIARD looked across the fire at his friend.

"After one sleep *you* go on," he drawled.

"You're feverish," retorted Dick Mansell.

"Maybe I am, but you talk like a crazy man. See here, Dick——"

Barney moved an arm to indicate the vast stretch of snow surrounding them, apparently limitless, touched by a pale moon, solitude enhanced by the fire—in Barney's pain-filled eyes undulating like a strange white sea. Through the fire-smoke the face of his friend stared at him intently.

"See here——"

"Here, here," interrupted Mansell, trying to steer the conversation into happier channels.

"Exactly—we are here and that's the —— of it! We're here. That is, we're —— only knows where, but call it some place far north where we have no —— business to be, with Winter on top of us, maybe a thousand miles from the nearest white man, at least five hundred. We're here, all right, and we were a couple of —— fools to come here. We're here, right here in the year of grace 1896, which is the fourth year of our disgrace—or is it the fifth? We're here—" Barney's voice rose eerily as his fever increased—"we're here and the grub is not here—very little of it, anyway. We're here, and I'm here with a broken leg. We've no dogs and I can't travel and the Winter's got us and we're miles and miles from any sort of help. That's so, isn't it?"

Mansell managed his old, familiar smile.

"Well, who said it wasn't? I'm not arguing with you."

"Oh, yes, you are, and you know it." Hilliard spoke defiantly.

"I must have been talking in my sleep, then."

"You never said a word! Your argument's your staying here—with me!"

"But—oh, try to go to sleep, Barney—but I don't intend to stay here with you."

"No, you intend to do a more foolish thing. You're going to try to get me out—dragging me on the sled—and you can not do it. Two men couldn't, because there is not grub enough for one. Besides, there'll be bad weather when we'll have to camp. That's your argument."

Barney began to plead.

"See here, Dick; what's the use? Alone, if you go like ——, you might make it; with me holding you back you can not. You go along. If you try to take me we'll both die. What's the use of killing two men when killing one will satisfy the god of the chances? Why the additional sacrifice of yourself?"

"Why?" snapped Mansell.

"Oh, yes, I——"

"See here, Barney, you're coming if I have to tie you or break your other leg. I know the moving will hurt and all that and I've no sort of dope to give you to ease the pain. If I had, it would be different—you wouldn't mind coming, then. The dope would put some backbone into you besides easing the pain. Pain's bad, I know, but only a quitter quits because of it. And so, you'd quit if I'd let you. You'd stay here, whining like a sickly Malemiut, with your gun in your hand, trying to nerve yourself up to blowing out what little brains the Lord gave you. Quitter! All because you're afraid of a bit of pain in a leg! Well, I don't intend to let you stay here to mess up the scenery. See?"

Barney grinned wryly.

"You say it well, Dick, and I get your meaning."

And the meaning, hidden in bitter, taunting words because of that deadly fear of betraying sentiment given to all Mansell's kind was: "Barney, you and I have traveled too many trails together for either of us ever to travel alone. So we'll make this one together. If it's the last or leads to the great last, we'll stay together until the end—until we can give a double knock upon the gates of ——, since there's little chance of our troubling Peter."

"Think you can smoke?" Mansell, suffering in sympathy, almost helpless in medicine, suggested the only anodyne at his disposal.

Hilliard, sick with pain, grinned.

"Guess I'd better try to sleep," and covered his face.

It had been one of those simple accidents. A slip, a doubling fall, and one of Barney's legs had snapped like a pipe-stem. Camping at once, Mansell had set the limb, effectually if crudely. That had been some hours before. Now he watched his friend across the fire, wondering if after all their wild adventures together they had reached the end. Even with Barney well and going strong their situation had been sufficiently desperate. With Hilliard helpless only a strong man could keep his head and face the future as it needed to be faced.

There was no planning required. They would start early. Mansell would use every atom of his strength and energy, traveling on the smallest possible allowance of food. They would probably die together in their tracks. After all, there were worse deaths. Indeed, there could hardly be a better. Mansell lighted his pipe—thank the Lord they had plenty of tobacco. But Hilliard was right. They were a long way from people and the course was due south.

"Come on, old-timer," Mansell broke camp. "I don't feel like sleep, so let's go."

"Going to handle me like I was a infant, are you?" Hilliard, swimming in the fancies of delirium, was doing his best to essay his usual drawl.

"There's nothing to be ashamed of in being an infant. I was once one myself," retorted Mansell.

"Dick—" Hilliard made a last effort, well aware of its uselessness—"Dick, go on. I'd just as soon wait here. You might meet some outfit and bring back help."

"You go to ——," retorted Mansell, lifting his friend to the sled.

"Sure, but why be so anxious to come with me? You'll get there all right and I'll reserve a room for you. In the mean while you can make it south—if you go alone and hustle. And south, Dick, are—are girls!"

"Comfortable?" asked Mansell.

"Beautifully so," drawled Hilliard.

Then—"Mush!"

* * *

THE crisp surface crackled; Mansell thanking God for a perfect trail. The moon dropped nearly to the western rim. The northern lights flashed weirdly. To the south it was very dark.

Very dark and Dick Mansell, plowing his grim way, felt that darkness like the touch of a pall descending upon his friend and himself. Hilliard's jest about an outfit! Outfit! How could there be outfits in this God-forsaken country? At the best they could only meet men as crazy as themselves—more crazy, since to meet an outfit meant that that outfit would be going north—at this time of the year. No, they would meet no outfit. They would meet—But Mansell crushed back that thought. Still, that this meant the end seemed too obvious to be denied. There wasn't one chance in a million of finding game. The end—out here in the wilderness. The end. No, that was the —— of it. Death did not mean the end of their disgrace, as Hilliard had put it. The evil that men do, or rather are accused of doing, is not forgotten when the wolves have stripped their bones. Mansell's face grew grimmer. The long-necked geese of the world!

Of a sudden he stopped dead. Into that waste of silence, to which the noise of the runners and his own breathing seemed to contribute, a voice had broken. Mansell dropped the harness, and went back to make Hilliard more comfortable. It had been his voice, babbling in delirium.

Mansell plowed on again. The toil was far less deadly than the monotony. Ahead, and now all around darkness. The creaking of the sled. The eternal trail, every inch like every other inch. And Hilliard out of his head.

Time. Time as a form of measurement had ceased to be. Through an eternal agony of Now Mansell toiled. The darkness lifted to the wan day but the man kept on; pausing now and then to help Barney and eat his tiny allowance of food. Again the dark enveloped them. It was the night of things, or had all things yet to be born? In this strange womb of eternity did he struggle toward existence, toward a light dreamed of but still uncreated? What did it matter? Stay with it. Stay with it! If one could stay long enough all questions would be answered.

Just how long that eternity of sameness continued Mansell would never be quite certain. To attempt to guess at it meant dividing it into æons—into strata of consciousness wherein nothing mattered. But he knew that he told himself a thousand times that, while there was no longer any time, if he had had the sense to stay in a civilized country he could have bought a watch for a dollar.

"Cuckoo!"

The mockery of the word—in the sing-song tone of a striking clock—stung Mansell like the lash of a whip, stinging him back to present reality. Maddened, he stopped pulling. A high-pitched laugh restored the equlibrium. Hilliard again.

Sympathy welled clearly from the depths of his own despair. Barney was sick; he was well. He cursed himself savagely, and bent again to his work.

He was still bending to his apparently interminable toil when the first wan light of the dawn of another brief day troubled his weary eyes. So fastened was his mind to his task that he was momentarily puzzled. The dim outline of a snow-hung group of spruce drew him. Came an irresistible craving for sleep. Veering to the left, he steered for the spruce. As the sled stopped the awful stillness again compelled appalling recognition. Well—dimly, defiantly he thought—there was this to it: there were no city sounds to keep him awake. But, still, a breath, just a breath of wind, however unpleasant it made traveling, would be welcome. Had all the wind left the world? But why wish for wind? Would an aching tooth ever be a substitute for companionship?

With a savageness unusual in him Mansell struck his ax into a branch. With a sickening dismay he saw the handle break under the pressure. There was no other ax and a fire was imperative.

Then Dick Mansell forgot his religion, for in such situations a man swings perilously at one extreme or the other; he is either cringingly devout or defiantly sacrilegious. For Mansell felt as one who hangs by one tired hand at the end of a long rope over an abyss, jerked as at the end of a titanic whip, with the rope badly stranded; and he grew illogical under the strain—blaming some supreme power for having made the abyss, the rope and himself. Thus he heard nothing but his own voice, borne upon a stillness that threatened vindictively. The stillness became a despotic, oppressive god.

"All right, god, keep on hitting me. I can't see you, can't hit back. But in spite of you, ——, high-water and a busted ax, I'm going to have a fire."

As he ceased, the crushing silence became more terrible. Then he felt as if some one were watching him. He swore again—this time at himself—while he sought wood possible to hands and knife.

"I wonder will you also swear at me, Lucifer-man, if I dare to suggest something to such a god-defying being?"

Mansell had thrown away the useless handle of his ax. Now he clutched at his gun. He was hearing things. In a moment he might be seeing them. Long ago, an old man had told him:

"If the loneliness or anything gets you and you hear and see things—fancies—send a bullet through what you see. That will prove it's nothing."

But as yet Mansell saw nothing. The voice had apparently come from among the trees. And such a voice! An angel, mocking him! Refined, cultivated!

"——, I'm worse than Barney and no cause to be," he almost groaned.

It was only a trifle lighter than night. A woman's voice, of course.

"You can turn your face to the wall and die comfortable if only a woman's holdin' your hand. Don't matter if she's a dance-hall girl or a squaw—and some of both of them last has more heart, not to speak of guts, than queens ever dreamed of havin'." The old man philosophizing again, and Mansell understood.

He was worn out, tired to death, and his unuttered wish had fathered his delusion. A woman's kindly hand would mean all the world in sympathy and encouragement. He craved such a hand; his whole being needed it. And his being had told this to his brain, and his brain had visioned his need and built an hallucination in an attempt to give him peace. The kindly angel of a child's troubled sleep.

You wouldn't shoot me, would you?"

There was no doubt about it. It was a woman's voice. Dick allowed his hand to forget his gun. Be the voice real or fancied, he would take it for all it was worth. After all, the whole world may be a delusion—many thinkers believe it is—and why quarrel with a fancy when the fancy is sweet, comforting? Love is but a fancy. It may sometimes have persistence; more often it is transitory. But what man is —— fool enough to quarrel with love, even if it lasts only for an hour? Anything may be nothing, and nothing everything. Dick Mansell grinned and squared his shoulders. Ever the aristocrat, he would be a gentleman even when dealing with his own fevered imagination, or, rather, with the product of it.

"Advance, lady of the desolation and thy willing slave will amuse thee, even to eating snow, in return for thy passing company!"

A laugh answered him.

"Even the imaginary production of a bughouse would call me crazy after that speech," thought Mansell.

And then—God knows how—he sensed what mortals call "reality." That is, he somehow knew that a "real," living woman was among the trees. But a woman in such a place! The very idea spelt madness. Not even an old squaw, left to die! And this was never a squaw.

The man's will seemed to have lost control of his feet. He turned his head toward the sled, as if to seek counsel of Barney.

"Cuckoo!"

Had Hilliard been sane instead of delirious he could not have culled a better word from the vocabulary upon which he so prided himself. Mansell laughed. He was a cuckoo standing there. A rude sort of bird, too. Could the god who invented the little things be, also, the maker of angels' wings?

"I beg your pardon," his tone mellow again, advancing toward the voice.

WHEN the girl came from the trees, into the wan light of the dawn, and Dick Mansell knew a rare feeling of shame, making no excuse for himself. A young girl, distinctive in her furs and very beautiful. Yes, beautiful, but limning mystery. How had she got there? What was she doing there? Educated, refined, different—a personality. 1896! Winter! Hardly a stamping-ground for women of her type, even if an occasional Summer does see a few strays.

They stared at each other—an exceptional woman and a very handsome man in spite of tiredness and the need of valeting. This for an open-mouthed moment or two. Then the girl sought escape from her embarrassment with—

"We must get the sick man into shelter."

"Shelter?"

Dazed, the fact of this girl's having a shelter somewhere near instead of seeming obvious to Dick Mansell added other mystery, for he was very tired and fatigue weighted his bewilderment. The wan light had increased to almost dull day. Shying at important problems, Mansell's mind hung about the question of her nationality. Was she American or English? As if it mattered in that moment! But trivial decisions crowd the greatest moments of life, parasites of thought, as it were, cunningly making themselves felt; and amid all that wild wealth of adventure which welded the lives of Dick Mansell and Barney Hilliard, until even death made but a sorry attempt to separate them—from the day they met, two children, in the quaint old Devonshire village until the deadly episode of the deputy sheriff, they had impinged upon nothing so romantically mysterious as this.

The group of trees hid the cabin of an old wanderer with a curiously beautiful belief—that the rough bustle of the world was too loud for the music of angels' voices; that only in the solitude could he feel the presence of the mother of this wonderful girl of his. And that he might have heard the rustle of his angels' wings in a quiet nearer to civilization was hardly a word against his faith.

The thousands of caribou, passing in season, gave them meat and one trip a year brought them flour and other necessaries. And the young girl, who also harbored quaint dreams, had found only comfort in this strange existence, until these two men, nearing the end of the trail, wandered into her life.

But, being exceeding real in their manliness, both awoke in her other dreams, none the less intriguing and strangely sweet. For the Fate that loves laughter and studies the play of mortal pain had apparently woven a kindly chain of circumstance with which to save the lives of the two friends—pretending a plan to keep them together for a brief span longer than a greater Fate had decreed.

So here was Hilliard mending a broken leg, Mansell waiting for it to mend, and that wonderful girl discovering that she had been desperately lonely for male society of the right sort—both men deciding that it was cruel to allow such loneliness to overcome her. Thus the leg mended.

The leg mended while the friendship of years strained to breaking—a partnership drifting toward wrecking upon the heart of a girl, who was no Lorelei but a good woman, helpless to help herself or prevent strong men loving her.

And just as no good sailor will allow his ship to go ashore with an anchor hanging at the bows, so these two sought holding-ground in their affection and memories; but although the cable of the woven years held stoutly for a time the strain snapped it. Dick Mansell and Barney Hilliard began to be studiously polite to each other. The bitter wind of a growing gale of jealousy carried away all the tender leaves of their long intimacy, leaving only the naked tree of primal desire, screened by a nimbus of idealism.

THE leg mended but Hilliard could have wished it had remained broken. Being an invalid has its advantages. That the girl was trying to play fair with both men was as obvious as that she could not decide which she liked better. And however the affair ended there was bound to be suffering. At least one heart—long believed to be stout by its owner—was destined for a deep wound. And there was that deeper hurt, that hurt which the loser would most deeply feel—the loss of a friendship and no soft arms to comfort.

Could they not have remained friends? Could not one have made the girl his without losing the friendship of the other? The question is too hypothetical. Perhaps both men loved too well, or perhaps the lonely country, with no other woman to gladden the sight of their eyes, had something to do with it. At any rate, friendship became an armed truce. Both were unusually strong men, both longed for the fight which seemed inevitable—believing as men of their sort when in love will believe, that the winner of such a fight would win the girl.

And then the extraordinary vocabulary of Barney Hilliard made a change in events.

Hilliard was one of those rare men who have read the dictionary through and enjoyed doing so. He had also a wonderful memory. Now we can not think without using words, and while the use of words may not always imply thought, a fine store of language will generally develop thought. That thought, like so many of the world's philosophies, will be conditioned by the mood of the thinker. So it was with Barney Hilliard that morning, with the Winter breaking into Spring, after watching Dick Mansell and the girl start out for a hike, to see the country, armed with a pair of binoculars.

Those glasses seemed a fine sarcasm to Hilliard. He waved a hand as they went, managed a grin, but the binoculars made him rage. They seemed like an intentional insult to himself. He raved inwardly. Did they think he would spy on them that they should take those things with which to keep a lookout?

The question limned his mental condition, but as he grew more calm he saw only sarcasm—the laugh on him, as it were—two people so close to each other that they could see into each other's eyes carrying field-glasses! In that moment Hilliard was near the border-line where anger drives to murder. Came reaction and the spinning of a web of saving words in the loom where he kept so many of them.

His mind brooded over the pain of the world and his old affection for Dick Mansell lighted up the gloom. He found himself thinking that we are only poor strugglers, cursed with the ability to feel too deeply, marching tiredly toward the land of shadows; our desires driving us to the daily march. And the pain we suffer when our stumbling feet are cut and bruised by the fragments of our broken hopes! With now and then a fleeting joy, such as—the kiss of the girl we love.

Barney Hilliard's normal chest measurement was forty-three inches, and when he reached this last conclusion he ached in every inch of it.

"Curious," he thought, "but when all the universe seems awry, when there is no future but death, it is then that a man realizes the need his fellowman has of sympathy. Maybe it was to teach us sympathy that God decided to keep us in ignorance of the reason of our being here—until we learn to love our fellows so greatly that we will not care about what happens to ourselves, either here or hereafter."

And God had never made a finer man than Mansell. Sitting at the door of the cabin, Hilliard grinned then at an old memory. Mansell and he had often laughed about it. And Hilliard could even take a laughing pride in it. Walking together, Mansell and he had passed an open ground-floor window of a house where lived two sisters—beautiful twins.

Sitting on the cabin-step, Hilliard laughed aloud—strange mortal! For he and his friend had paused a moment just beyond that window.... Summer, and years ago! Again Hilliard laughed, and in that laugh became very much himself. For they had heard one sister say to the other—

"There goes *Sir Lancelot* and his friend the gorilla!"

Mansell, six feet two, dark, handsome, and Hilliard five feet six, not by any manner of means good-looking except for that in which he took such pride. For while Mansell could boast a forty-one-inch normal chest, Hilliard measured forty-three; and his neck, calf, upper arm were each sixteen inches. Yet his waist was only thirty-three and he could not wear a belt because of his narrow flanks. He had cause to be proud of that body and the gorilla title of the young girl was not ill-chosen.

One may read of men who can bend a half-dollar, but such a man never lived. The feat is impossible. But Barney Hilliard could tear two packs of cards in those rather small hands of his and not bake the cards before as do stage "strong" men. And this memory played compass to the man's vocabulary—showed him the final direction of his thoughts and steeped them in that strange emotion which men share with plants and call "altruism."

Thus, pulsing from the soul of Hilliard—from that part of him called personality, wherein lingered all the best of his forebears, fighters and lovers—came an even greater friendship than even time and the trail had developed. Besides, as he said, Dick was the better man, would make the better husband; and with Hilliard out of the way, the kind heart of the girl would find no cause for regret. Anyhow, Hilliard did not want her to feel sorry for him, and it seemed in that moment that her one reason for not choosing Mansell was her fear of hurting Hilliard.

But was this quitting? Hilliard sneered. If any one accused him of quitting, he would. . . . Again he laughed and again the equilibrium was restored. Quitting? He would rather like to have some narrow-head tell him that. What a time the speaker would have! Barney Hilliard got to his feet and sought the girl's father. There was plenty of grub and while the old man might want to give what was needed Hilliard had over a thousand dollars with him.

THE girl's father said little.

"I'm not leaving any messages," said Barney; "and if anybody asks questions, you can tell 'em what you like, but what you say won't be any less of a guess than what others may think."

They shook hands, and Barney turned away.

"I shall never forget your kindness," he added, "nor the swell nursing I got."

Then he started south toward the Summer.

Thus it chanced that Dick Mansell, using those unfortunate binoculars, saw his rival who had once been his friend going out of his life and thrilled to the meaning of it all; the while the nearness of the girl intoxicated him and she seemed fairer than ever in his eyes.

But for Barney there was only a desperate and growing loneliness. That Spring was awakening with all manner of whisperings not only failed to comfort but increased his sense of desolation, until the mental drag of it reached his powerful body and he felt curiously tired. The "pep" had gone out of him. Life held no further interest. Without being aware of it, Barney Hilliard was learning the feelings of a beaten man. The world was a disgusting place where everything went wrong. Nothing was worth while. He made camp, craving sleep, haunted by a half-born wish that he would never wake up.

But sleep refused him, woo as he might. This was an entirely new experience. Tobacco too frowned instead of soothing. Only the fire held to its duty, burning clearly, beaming warmly over the man.

"Kinship—" Hilliard stared into the fire. "That flame there, born apparently of a few sticks, is my brother. The sunlight stored in the wood is giving off the warmth of its life, and I am transforming the solar energy which I have absorbed from the food I have eaten into vanity and mere unhappiness. Yet—pictured in the firelight—I am always conscious of *something* behind the fire. Dreams, maybe and maybe not. If I did not feel sure that death does not mean the end of me, I would put myself to sleep with a bullet. . . . Funny about the pictures in firelight and the fascination they have for men, especially lonely men."

Thus the first hours of the night went by. About one o'clock the man determined upon a desperate effort to sleep. Resolutely he wrapped himself in his blankets and turned his face from the fire. A few moments later, it seemed, he awoke to the sense of other life near him.

In that condition which lies between dreaming and being fully awake Hilliard thought of many animals—wolves, bears, what not—but remained quite indifferent. He was alive—what animal would bother him? Winter had passed, there was food in plenty. Besides, he would have fair warning if whatever it was started anything. He was very tired and did not wish fully to awake. The half-dream state was alluring; he wanted to sink more deeply into it. The faint crackle of the fire seemed very far away. It ceased.

Then a distant waterfall began its soothing song. Above it the spray formed into clouds and in those clouds were dreams. Hilliard felt himself drawing toward those clouds, for he was sure that among the dreams he would find faces he greatly desired to see.

"Barney!"

The word, in that old familiar voice, wakened Hilliard like the sound of a gun. He turned swiftly, raised himself on an elbow and stared, wide awake, at Dick Mansell. For some little time there was a strained silence—Mansell sitting by the fire, apparently having some sort of trouble with his pipe.

"What in —— are you doing here?" For the first time in his life Hilliard spoke angrily to Mansell.

Mansell did not answer.

"Well?" growled Hilliard, but his anger was lessening.

Mansell made no reply, and Hilliard found himself wondering at his own surprize when he saw all Mansell's earthly belongings lying just beyond the fire.

"Well, what *are* you doing here?" again demanded Hilliard.

"Here, here," Mansell echoed, reminding Hilliard of their last argument by the fire on the trail.

"Oh, I'm not delirious now." Hilliard was unusually devoid of the right words.

"No?" Mansell's word was a query.

"No—it's you that's crazy."

"What—again?"

"See here, Dick," Hilliard grinned. "You don't want to go south—at least, not now. Go back to—to where you belong. Go on now and leave me to—to go to sleep."

"You go to ——," answered Mansell kindly.

"Sure, but why do you want to go along?"

"Why?"

"Oh, the ——, Dick! It's a hard thing to talk about, but—you know what I mean. Go back. Back—there—there's some one who wants you."

"And nobody wants me here, eh?"

"Don't be an idiot—you know very well what I mean!"

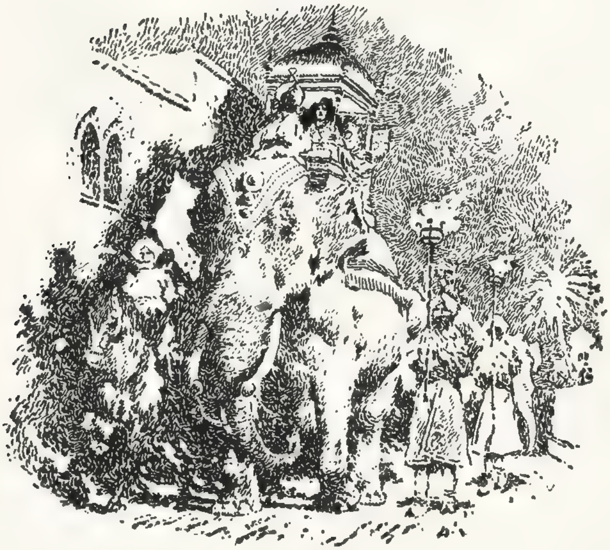
"How do I know?"

"Well, you know that—that Phyllis is—that she wants you to stay there—with her."

"I am going south—with you!" said Mansell determinedly.

"But," Hilliard glowed, "but she—doesn't she want you to stay with her?"

"How should I know?" Mansell began to fill the pipe. "How should I know when I never asked her?"



GUNS of the GODS

A FIVE-PART STORY

Part IV

by Talbot Mundy

Author of "In Aleppo Bazaar," "Barabbas Island," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

THE Russian Princess Sonia Omanoff was accused of the murder of her husband and sentenced to life-imprisonment in the Siberian mines. Intriguing friends smuggled her off to Paris. During her subsequent residence there she fell in love with Bubru Singh, a Rajput maharaja on his educational "Grand Tour." She married him and he took her to his kingdom in India. There he died soon after the birth of their daughter, Yasmini. That is the introduction to this story.

Gungadhura Singh, Bubru's nephew, succeeded him as maharaja. The new ruler assigned a palace in Sialpore to Sonia for her personal use, and there the Princess Yasmini was brought up, a child who inherited from her mother all the cunning of Russian court-intriguers and from her father an intense love of India.

In Sialpore the money-lender Mukhum Dass leased a house to Dick Blaine. Blaine was an American mining engineer who had settled in Sialpore at the request of Gungadhura Singh for a mining expert to explore the old gold-workings in the hills. Dick Blaine was about forty; his wife, ten years younger.

Tess Blaine from the start loved India. One dawn she stole from her bed and stood, thinly clad, at her window to wonder at the rich colors of the gorgeous sunrise. After her husband had gone to work, a handsome and dandified young man called, a Rajput of Rajputs. Several slight mannerisms he affected led Tess to detect that her visitor was a woman, an exceedingly pretty young woman, in male attire.

"I am the rightful Maharanee of Sialpore," the girl confessed after admitting her sex, "only those fools of English have given Sialpore to Gungadhura, who is a pig, and loathes them."

Their chat was interrupted by the arrival of Tom Tripe. This eccentric fellow was drillmaster of the maharaja's troops and an admirer of the Blaines' democratic hospitality, so unlike the formality of the English residents. The woman in man's garb suddenly produced a Bank of India note for one thousand rupees and a fountain pen and before Tom entered the house scrawled Persian characters on the paper. Tess introduced her to Tom as Gunga Singh, but Tom immediately recognized her and exclaimed:

"So the Princess Yasmini is Gunga Singh this morning, eh? That won't do. I swore on my Bible oath to the maharaja day before yesterday that I'd left you closely guarded in the palace place across the river."

But protesting against the violation of her hospitality to all visitors, Tess refused to allow the drillmaster to take the princess to the palace.

The coming of the commissioner, leading his horse up the hill, spoiled all chances of Tom Tripe's persuading the princess to go with him. She whirled on Chamu, the Blaines' native butler, and accused him of stealing her one-thousand-rupee note.

"Feel in his cummerbund, Tom Tripe," she commanded. "I saw where the money went."

Tom felt in Chamu's sash and from its folds produced the note.

"Go to the palace and tell the maharaja that the princess is at the house of the commissioner *sahib*," she stormed at the terrified butler, while he protested that he was innocent. "And keep the thousand-rupee note to pay thy son's gambling-debt to Mukhum Dass."

Chamu slunk away to do her bidding.

When Commissioner Samson was being entertained on the veranda by Tess, and Tom had ridden away, Yasmini in the parlor listened to their conversation. The commissioner told Tess of the Sialpore Treasure. This was a vast ancestral hoard, buried somewhere in that region. Although Gungadhura knew nothing of its whereabouts, he said, it was the maharaja's rightful inheritance from his ancestors. The secret had died with Bubru Singh. It was generally thought that Blaine had come to Sialpore to search for the Treasure rather than for the gold in the hills.

"Gungadhura Singh is a spendthrift," he declared. "Gungadhura will surely claim the Treasure if your husband finds it."

He also informed Tess of many other local conditions and asked her if they were sure of their lease on the house.

"I've been told there's a question about the title. Some one's bringing suit against your landlord for possession on some ground or other."

After he had gone, Yasmini jubilantly kissed Tess, saying that she behaved perfectly. The princess was sure Samson had a trick up his sleeve.

When Dick returned that night and Tess told him the events of the day, he declared his fidelity to Gungadhura.

Yasmini went to Mukhum Dass. She told the money-lender she knew that he had asked an intercession of a priest of the god Jinendra to help him recover a title deed to the Blaines' house which Mukhum Dass had lost. Dhulap Singh, Gungadhura's agent, was eager to get possession of the house for his master, she said, for the maharaja believed the Sialpore Treasure was hidden under it. And if Dhulap Singh found the title deed, it would establish the claim to the house he was about to present in a lawsuit.

"Chamu the butler will pay his son's gambling-debt. Give him a receipt, saying nothing. Your part is silence in all matters. Otherwise the priest of Jinendra will transfer the title deed to Dhulap Singh. Preserve the bank-note for thirty days and keep silence."

ONE afternoon while Dick Blaine was at the mine Tess had several visitors. One was Utirupa, a handsome Rajput prince. During his call Tom Tripe gave Tess a letter from Yasmini. Last of all, after Utirupa had gone, came Samson, the commissioner. At his appearance Tom Tripe hid behind a clump of shrubbery. Tess and Samson strolled through the garden, and Samson, growing unconventionally familiar, suggested to Tess that he call her Theresa instead of Mrs. Blaine.

"I think you had better call me Mrs. Blaine," Tess replied, while Tom Tripe looked on in glee from his hiding-place.

"There's an intrigue going on," said Samson, "and you can help me. People whose business it is to keep me informed have reported that Tom Tripe is constantly carrying letters from the Princess Yasmini to that young Prince Utirupa who was here this afternoon. If Gungadhura Singh were found committing treason he'd be deposed. Then Utirupa would be maharaja, being next in line. And I want to find out what the princess has to do with it. I want you to make the acquaintance of the princess, visit her tonight and find out what are the letters she writes to Utirupa."

And he gave her a letter that would admit her to the palace of Yasmini past the guards posted there.

Tess consented. It was the command of a government official.

Dick Blaine returned and Tess showed him the letter Tom had brought her from Yasmini, urging Tess to visit her at the palace at once. Tess already suspected that Samson was a rascal playing for political fortunes.

So in their dog-cart Dick drove Tess to the palace. But there the guard insolently ordered them away and it was only the intervention of Tom Tripe that gained Tess admittance to the stronghold where Gungadhura kept Yasmini prisoner.

Yasmini's chief interest was in the food Tess had brought, for the princess had fasted since the latest attempt of Gungadhura to poison her.

Then Yasmini informed Tess that the vein of gold Dick had discovered would soon run into English territory, over which the maharaja had no jurisdiction. Samson, she said, would claim the gold and make a fortune.

"Your husband," insisted Yasmini, "must dig in a new place. Let your husband show Samson how poor the specimens are he is digging and that will be the end of Gungadhura. Then I shall escape. Your husband shall wait for me with his dog-cart."

To this Tess agreed.

Gungadhura attacked Yasmini's palace one night while Tess was visiting her. Both women managed to escape and rode together with Dick to the Blaines' house. Dick gave his consent to Tess' going on a journey with Yasmini.

A native, Sita Ram, overheard a conversation between the High Priest of Jinendra and Commissioner Samson. The High Priest claimed that one-half of the Treasure of Sialpore belonged to the priests. Samson finally agreed to giving the priests five per cent. of the Treasure. Sita Ram found the pieces of a letter the commissioner had written. He put these together and got Tom Tripe, who went to the cellar of the Blaines' house, breaking in while Dick was away. Dick returned and found Tom in the cellar. He sent him away and dismissed Chamu from his service.

Tess and Yasmini then went on a journey by camel to an outlying territory. Tess was camel-sick and exhausted at the end of the trip, but quickly recovered after a rub-down by native women.

There she spied upon the tryst of Yasmini and Prince Utirupa. They were already married in the ancient Indian style. Tess wondered at the beauty and romance of their meeting.

Tom Tripe reported his adventure at the Blaines' house to Gungadhura. The maharaja was furious that Tom did not take a "silver tube" he found in the cellar, "all wrought over with Persian characters." His stealing it, Tom said, was prevented by the unexpected return of Dick. But Gungadhura would not be appeased until the silver tube was in his hands.

HE WHO sets a tiger-trap
(Hush! And watch! And wait!)
Can't afford a little nap
Hidden where the twigs enwrap
Lest—it *has* occurred—mayhap
A jackal take the bait.
So stay awake, my sportsman bold,
And peel your anxious eye,
There's more than tigers, so I'm told,
To test your woodcraft by!

CHAPTER XV

"Me for the princess!"

IT IS not always an entirely simple matter in India to dismiss domestic servants. To begin with it was Sunday; the ordinary means of cashing checks were therefore unavailable, and Dick Blaine had overlooked the fact that he had no money of small denominations in the house. It was hardly reasonable to expect Chamu and the cook to leave without their wages.

Then again Sita Ram had not yet sent new servants to replace the potential poisoners; and Chamu had put up a piteous bleating, using every argument, from his being an orphan and the father of a son, down to the less appealing one that Gungadhura would be angry.

In vain Dick reassured him that he and cook and maharaja might all go to —— together with his, Dick Blaine's, express permission. In vain he advised him to put the son to work, and be supported for a while in idleness. Chamu lamented noisily.

Finally Dick compromised by letting both servants remain for one more day, reflecting that they could not very well tamper with boiled eggs; lunch and dinner he would get at the English club across the river; for breakfast on Monday he would content himself again with boiled eggs and biscuits out of an imported tin, after which he would cash a check and send both the rascals packing.

So the toast that Chamu brought him he broke up and threw into the garden, where the crows devoured it without apparent ill effect; he went without tea, and spent an hour or so after breakfast with a good cigar and a copy of a month-old Nevada newspaper. That religious rite performed, he shaved twice over, it being Sunday, and strolled out to look at the horses and potter about the garden that was beginning to shrivel up already at the commencement of the hot weather.

"If I knew who would be maharaja of this State from one week to the next," he told himself, "I'd get a contract from him to pipe water all over the place from the hills behind."

He was sitting in the shade, chewing an unlit cigar, day-dreaming about water-pressure and dams and gallons-per-hour, when Gungadhura's note came and he ordered the dog-cart at once, rather glad of something to keep him occupied. As he drove away he did not see Mukhum Dass lurking near the small gate, as it was not intended that he should.

Mukhum Dass for his part did not see Pinga, the one-eyed beggar with his vertical smile, who watched him from behind a rock; for that was not intended either. Pinga himself was noticed closely by another man.

The minute Dick was out of sight Mukhum Dass entered the small gate in the wall and called out for Chamu brazenly. Chamu received him at the bottom of the house-steps, but Mukhum Dass walked up them uninvited.

"The cellar," he said. "I have come to see the cellar. There is a complaint regarding the foundations. I must see."

"But, *sahib*, the door is locked."

"Unlock it."

"I have no key."

"Then break the lock."

"The cellar door is nailed down."

"Draw the nails."

"I dare not. I don't know how. By what right should I do this thing?"

"It is my house. I order it."

"But, *sahib*, only yesterday Blaine *sahib* dismissed me in great anger because I permitted another one as much as to look into the cellar."

If the tale Yasmini told him on the morning of her first visit to Tess had not been enough to determine Mukhum Dass, now, with the lost title deed recovered, the conviction that Gungadhura wanted the place for secret reasons, and Chamu's objections to confirm the whole wild story, he became as set on his course and as determined to wring the last anna out of the mystery as only a money-lender can be.

"With what money did you repay to me the loan that your son obtained by false pretenses?" he demanded.

"I? What? I repaid the loan. I have the receipt. That is enough."

"On the receipt stands written the number of the bank-note. I have kept the bank-note. It was stolen from the Princess Yasmini. Do you wish to go to jail? Then open that cellar door."

"*Sahib*, I never stole the note," wept Chamu. "It was thrust into my cummerbund from behind."

BUT Mukhum Dass set his face like a flint, and the wretched Chamu knew nothing about the law against compounding felonies. Wishing he had had curiosity enough himself to search the cellar thoroughly before the door was nailed down, he finally yielded to the money-lender's threats; and between them, with much sweating and grunting, they pushed and pulled the safe from off the trap.

Then came the much more difficult task of drawing nails without an instrument designed for it. Dick Blaine kept all his tools locked up.

"There is an outside door to the cellar, behind the house," said Chamu.

"But that is of iron, idiot! And bolts on the inside with a great bar resting in the stonework. Are there no tools in the garden?"

Chamu did not know, and the money-lender went himself to see. There Pinga with the vertical smile saw him choose a small crowbar and return into the house with it. Pinga passed the word along to another man, who told it to a third, who ran with it hot-foot to Gungadhura's palace.

Once inside the house again Mukhum Dass lost no time, arguing to himself most likely that with the secret of the Treasure of Sialpore in his possession it could not much matter what damage he had done. He would be able to settle for it. He broke the hasp of the door and levered up the trap, splintering it badly and breaking both hinges in the process, while Chamu watched him, growing green with fear.

Then he ordered a lamp and went alone into the cellar, while Chamu, deciding that a desperate situation called for desperate remedies, went up-stairs on business of his own. It took Mukhum Dass about two minutes to discover the loose stone—less than two more to raise it—and about ten seconds to see and pounce on the silver tube. He was too bent on business to notice the man with the vertical smile peering down at him through the trap.

Pinga escaped from the house after seeing the money-lender hide the tube inside his clothes, and less than a minute later a lean man ran like the wind to Gungadhura's palace to confirm the first's report.

With a wry face at the splintered trap-door, and a shrug of his shoulders of the kind he used when clients begged in tears for extra time in which to pay, Mukhum Dass looked about for Chamu with a sort of half-notion of giving him a small bribe. But Chamu was not to be seen. So he left the house by the way he had come, mounted his mule where he had left it in a hollow down the road, and rode off smiling.

Ten minutes later Chamu and the cook both left by the same exit. Chamu had with him, besides his own bundle of belongings, a revolver belonging to Dick Blaine, two bracelets belonging to Tess, a fountain pen that he had long had his heart on, plenty of note-paper on which to have a writer forge new references, a half-dozen of Dick's silk handkerchiefs and a turquoise tie-pin. The revolver alone in that country in those days would sell for enough to take him to Bombay, where new jobs with newly arrived *sahibs* are plentiful.

The cook, not having enjoyed the run of the house, had only a few knives and a pound of cocoa. They quarreled all the way down-hill as to why Chamu should and should not defray the cook's traveling expenses.

A little later, in the *ghat* between Siva's temple and the building where the dead Afghan used to keep his camels, Mukhum Dass, smiling as he rode, was struck down by a knife-blow from behind and pitched off his mule head foremost The mule ran away. The money-lender's body was left lying in a pool of blood with the clothing torn from it; and it was considered by those who found the body several hours afterward and drove away the pariah dogs and kites, that the fact of his money having been taken deprived the murder of any unusual interest.

Late that evening Dick Blaine, returning from a desultory dinner at the club across the river, very nearly fell into the trapdoor; for the *hamal* had run away too, thinking he would surely be accused of all the mischief; and no lamps were lighted.

"Well!" he remarked, striking a match to look about him. "Dad-blame me if that isn't a regular small-town yegg's trick! You'd think after I gave Gungadhura the key and all he'd have the courtesy to use it and draw the nails. His head can't ache enough to suit me.

"Me for the princess! If I'd any scruples, believe me, bo, they're vanished—gone—vamoosed! That young woman's going to win against the whole darned outfit, English, Indian and all! Me for her!

"Chamu! Where's Chamu? Why aren't the lamps lit?"

He wandered through the house in the dark in search of servants, and finally lighted a lamp himself, locked all the doors and went to bed.

THE buildings rear immense; horizons fade
And thought forgets old gages in the ecstasy of view.
The standards go by which the steps were made
On which we trod from former levels to the new.
No time for backward glance, no pause for breath,
Since impulse as a bowstring bent has loosed us in full flight
And in delirium of speed none aim considereth
Nor in the blaze of burning usages can think of night.
The whirring of sped wheels and horn remind
That speed, more speed is paramount, and quietness is waste!
They rank unfortunate who rest behind
And only they seem wise who forge ahead, and haste and haste.
New comforts multiply (for there is need!)
Each ballot adds assent to law that crowds the days.
None pause. None clamor but for speed—more speed!
And yet—there *was* a sweetness in the olden ways.

CHAPTER XVI

"And since, my lords, in olden days——"

TROTTERS, fed on chopped raw meat by advice of Tess, and brushed by Bimbu for an hour to get the stiffness out of him, was sent off in the noon heat with a double message for his master, one addressed to Samson, one to Dick Blaine, and both wrapped in the same chewed leather cover, that the dog might understand.

The mongrel in him made him more immune to heat than a thoroughbred would have been. In any case, he showed nothing but eagerness to get back to Tom Tripe, and, settling the package comfortably in his jaws, was off without ceremony at a steady canter.

"If all my friends were like that one," said Yasmini, "I would be empress of the earth, not queen of a little part of Rajputana. However, one thing at a time."

It was hardly more than a village that Tess could see through the jalousies of her bedroom windows. The room was at a corner, so that she had a wide view in two directions from either deep window-seat.

There were all the signs of Indian village life about her—low, thatched houses in compounds fenced with thorn and prickly pear—temples in between them—trades and handicrafts plied in the shade of ancient trees—squalor and beauty, leisure, wealth, poverty and lordliness all hand in hand.

She could see the backs of elephants standing in a compound under trees, and there were peacocks swaggering everywhere, eating the same offal, though, as the unpretentious chickens in the streets. Over in the distance, beyond the elephants, was the tiled roof of a great house glinting in strong sunlight between the green of enormous pipal-trees; and there were other houses, strong to look at but not so great, jumbled together in one quarter where a stream passed through the village.

Yasmini came and sat beside her in the window-seat, as simply dressed in white as on the night before, with her gold hair braided up loosely and an air of reveling in the luxury of peace and rest.

"That great house," she said, peering through the jalousies, "is where the ceremony is to be tonight. My father's father built it. This is not our State, but he owned the land."

"Doesn't it belong to Gungadhura now?" Tess asked.

"No. It was part of my legacy. This house, too, that we are in. Look, some of them have come on elephants to do me honor.

"Many of the nobles of the land are poor in these days; one, they tell me, came on foot, walking by night lest the ill-bred laugh at him. He has a horse now. He shall have ten when I am maharanee."

"Won't the English get to hear of this?" Tess asked.

Yasmini laughed.

"Their spies are everywhere. But there has been great talk of a polo tournament to be held on the English side of the river at Sialpore. The English encourage games, thinking they keep us Rajputs out of mischief—as indeed is true.

"This then is a conference to decide which of our young bloods shall take part in the tournament, and who shall contribute ponies. The English lend one another ponies; why not we? The spies will report great interest in the polo tournament, and the English will smile complacently."

"But suppose a spy gets in to see the ceremony?" Tess suggested.

Yasmini's blue eyes looked into hers and there was a viking glare behind them, suggestive of the wintry fjords whence one of her royal ancestresses came.

"Let him!" she said. "It would be the last of him."

Tess considered a while in silence.

"When is the tournament to be?" she asked presently. "Won't the English think it strange that the conference about men and ponies should be put off until so late?"

"They might have," Yasmini answered. "They are suspicious of all gatherings. But a month ago we worked up a dispute entirely for their benefit. This is supposed to be a last-hour effort to bring cohesion out of jealousy.

"The English like to see Rajputs quarrel among themselves, because of their ancient saw that says, 'Divide and govern.' I do not understand the English altogether—yet; but in some ways they are like an open book. They will let us quarrel over polo to our hearts' content."

THERE is something very close to luxury in following the thread of an intrigue, sitting on soft cushions with the sunlight sending layers of golden shafts through jalousies into a cool room; so little of the strain and danger of it; so much of its engagement. Tess was enjoying herself to the top of her bent.

"But when the ceremony is over," she said, "and you yourself have proclaimed Prince Utirupa King of Sialpore, there will still remain the problem of how to make the English recognize him. There is Gungadhura, for instance, to get out of the way; and Gungadhura's sons—how many has he?"

"Five, all whole and well. But the dogs must suffer for their breeding. Who takes a reverter's colt to school into a charger? The English will turn their eyes away from Gungadhura's stock."

"But Gungadhura himself?"

"Is in the toils already. Say this for the English: They are slow to reach conclusions—slower still to change their policy; but when their mind is made up they are swift.

"Gungadhura has been sending messages to the northwest tribes. How do I know? You saw Ismail, my gateman? His very brother took the letters back and forth."

"But why should Gungadhura risk his throne by anything so foolish?"

"He thinks to save it. He thinks to prove that the tribes began the dickering, and then to offer his army to the English—Tom Tripe and all! Patali put him up to it. Perhaps she wants a necklace made of hillmen's teeth—who knows!

"Gungadhura went deeply into debt with Mukhum Dass to send money to the Mahsudis, who think more of gold than promises. The fool imagines that the English will let him levy extra taxes afterward to recoup himself. Besides, there would be the daily expenses of his army, from which he could extract a lakh or two. Patali yearns for diamonds in the fillings of her teeth."

"Did you work out all this deep plot for yourself?" Tess asked.

"I and the gods. The gods of India love intrigue. My father left me as a sort of ward of Jinendra, although my mother tried to make a Christian of me, and I always mistrusted Jinendra's priest. But Jinendra has been good. He shall have two new temples when I am maharanee."

"And you have been looking for the Treasure ever since your father died?"

"Ever since. My father prophesied on his death-bed that I should have it in the end, but all he told to help me find it was a sort of conundrum.

"'Whoever looks for flowers,' he said, 'finds happiness. Who looks for gold finds all the harness and the teeth of war. A hundred guard the Treasure day and night, changing with the full moon.'

"So I have always looked for flowers,

and I am often happy. I have sent flowers every day to the temple of Jinendra."

"Who or what can the hundred be who guard the Treasure day and night?" Tess wondered.

"That is what puzzled me. At first, because I was very young, I thought they must be snakes. So I made friends with the snakes, learning how to handle even cobras without fear of them.

"Then when I had learned that snakes could tell me nothing, but are only *Widyadharas*—beautiful lost fairies dreadfully afraid of men, and very, very wishful to be comforted—I began to think the hundred must be priests. So I made friends with the priests, and let them teach me all their knowledge. But they know nothing. They are parasites. They teach only what will keep men in their power, and women in subjection, themselves not understanding what they teach. I soon learned that if the priests were treasure-guards their charge would have been dissipated long ago.

"Then I looked for a hundred trees, and found them. A hundred pipal-trees all in a place together. But that was only like the first goal in the very first *chukker* of the game—as you shall learn soon."

"Then surely I know," said Tess excitedly. "In the grounds of the palace across the river, that you escaped from the night before you came to see me, there is quite a little forest of pipals."

"Nine and sixty and the roots of four," Yasmini answered, her eyes glowing as if there were fire behind them. "The difficulty is, though, that they don't change with the full moon. Pipal-trees grow on forever, never changing except to grow bigger and bigger. They outlive centuries of men. Nevertheless they gave me the clue, not only to the Treasure but to the winning of it."

The afternoon wore on in drowsy quiet, both of the girls sleeping at intervals—waited on at intervals by Hasamurti with fruit and cooling drinks—Yasmini silent oftener than not as the sun went lower, as if the details of what she had to do that night were rehearsing themselves in her mind.

No amount of questioning by Tess could make her speak of them again, or tell any more about the secret of the Treasure. At that age already she knew too well the virtue and fun of unexpectedness.

THEY ate together very early, reclining at a low table heaped with more varieties of food than Tess had dreamed that India could produce; but ate sparingly because the weight of what was coming impressed them both. Hasamurti sang during the meal, ballad after ballad of the warring history of Rajasthan and its royal heroines, accompanying herself on a stringed instrument; and the ballads seemed to strike the right chord in Yasmini's heart, for when the meal finished she was queenly and alert, her blue eyes blazing.

Then came the business of dressing, and two maids took Tess into her room to bathe and comb and scent and polish her, until she wondered how the rest of the world got on without handmaidens, and laughed to think that one short week ago she had never had a personal attendant since her nurse. Swiftly the luxurious habit grows; she rather hoped her husband might become rich enough to provide her a maid always!

And after all that thought and trouble and attention she stood arrayed at last as no more than a maid herself—true, a maid of royalty; but very simply dressed, without a jewel, with plain light sandals on her stockinged feet, and with a plain veil hanging to below her knees—all creamy white. She admitted to herself that she looked beautiful in the long glass, and wished that Dick could see her so, not guessing how soon Dick would see her far more gorgeously arrayed.

Yasmini, when she came into the room, was a picture to take the breath away—a rhapsody in cream and amber, glittering with gems. There were diamonds sparkling on her girdle, bosom, ears, arms; a ruby like a prince's ransom nestled at her throat; there were emeralds and sapphires stitched to the soft texture of her dress to glow and glitter as she moved; and her hair was afire with points of diamond light. Coil on coil of huge pearls hung from her shoulders to her waist, and pearls were on her sandals.

"Child, where in Heaven's name did you get them all?" Tess burst out.

"These? These jewels? Some are the gifts of Rajput noblemen. Some are heirlooms lent for the occasion. This—and this—" she touched the ruby at her throat and a diamond that glittered at her breast like frozen dew—"he gave me. He sent them by his brother with an escort of eight gentlemen. But you should wear jewels too."

"I have none—none with me."

"I thought of that. I borrowed these for you."

With her own hands she put opals around Tess' neck that glowed as if they were alive, and then bracelets on her right arm of heavy, graven gold; then kissed her.

"You look lovely! I shall need you tonight. No other human being guesses how I need you. You and Hasamurti are to stand close to me until the end. The other maids will take their place behind us. Now we are ready. Come."

Outside in the dark there were torches flaring, and low, gruff voices announced the presence of about fifty men. Once or twice a stallion neighed; and there was another footfall, padded and heavy, in among the stamping of held horses.

The night was hot and full of that musty, mesmeric quality that changes everything into a waking dream. The maids threw dark veils over them to save their clothing from the dust kicked up by a crowd, and perhaps too as a concession to the none-so-ancient but compelling custom that bids women be covered in the streets.

Yasmini took Tess by the hand and walked out with her, followed closely by Hasamurti and the other women, between the pomegranates to the gate in the garden wall. From that moment, though, she stood alone and never touched hand or sought as much as the supporting glances of her women until they came back at midnight.

A watchman opened the gate, and, Yasmini leading, they passed through a double line of Rajput noblemen, who drew their sabers at some one's hoarse command and made a steel arch overhead that flashed and shimmered in the torchlight. Beyond that one order to draw sabers none spoke a word. Tess looked straight in front of her, afraid to meet the warrior eyes on either hand, lest some one should object to a foreigner in their midst on such a night of nights.

In the road were three great elephants standing in line with ladders leaning against them. The one in front was a tusker with golden caps and chains on his glistening ivory, and a howdah on his back like a miniature pagoda—a great gray monster, old in the service of three Rajput generations, and more conscious of his dignity than years.

Yasmini mounted him, followed by Tess and Hasamurti, who took their place behind her in the howdah, one on either side, Hasamurti pushing Tess into her proper place, after which her duty was to keep a royal fan of ostrich plumes gently moving in the air above Yasmini's head.

The other women climbed on to the elephant behind, and the third one was mounted by one man, who looked like a prince, to judge by the jewels glittering in his turban.

"His brother!" Hasamurti whispered.

THEN again a hoarse command broke on the stillness. Horses wheeled out from the shadow of the wall, led by *saises*, and the Rajput gentry mounted. Ten of them in line abreast led the procession, while some formed a single line on either hand, and ten brought up the rear. Men with torches walked outside the lines. But no one shouted. No one spoke.

Straight down the quiet road under the majestic trees, with the monkeys, frightened by the torchlight, chattering nervously among the branches—to the right near the lane Yasmini used the night before, and on toward the shadowy bulk of the great house in the distance the elephants trod loftily, the swing and sway of their backs suggesting ages of past history, and everlasting ages more to come. The horses kicked and squealed, for the Rajput loves a mettled mount; but nothing disturbed the elephants' slow, measured stride, or moved the equanimity of their mahouts.

Villagers came to the walls, and stood under the roadside trees to smile and stare. Every man and child salaamed low as the procession passed, and some followed in the dust to feast their curiosity until the end of it; but not a voice was raised much above a whisper, except where once or twice a child cried shrilly.

"Why the silence?" Tess asked in a whisper, and without turning her head Yasmini answered:

"Would you have the English know that I was hailed as maharanee through the streets? Give them but leave and they would beat the tomtoms and dance under the trees. These are all friends here."

The great house was surrounded by a high wall, but a gate was flung wide open to receive them and the procession never paused until the leading elephant came to a halt under a portico lighted by dozens of oil lamps. Standing on the porch were four women, veiled, but showing the glint of jewels and the sheen of splendid dresses underneath; they were the first that night to give tongue in acclamation, raising a hubbub of greeting with a waving of slim hands and arms. They clustered round Yasmini as she climbed down from the elephant, and led her into the hall with arms in hers and a thousand phrases of congratulation and glad welcome.

"Four queens!" Hasamurti whispered.

Tess and Hasamurti followed, side by side, not down the main hall, but to the left, into a suite of rooms reserved for women, where they all removed their veils and the talking and laughter began anew. There were dozens of other women in there—about half as many ladies as attendants—and they made more noise than a swarm of Vassar freshmen at the close of term.

The largest of the suite of rooms was higher than the rest by half a dozen steps. At its farther end was a gilded door, on either side of which, as far as the walls at each end, was a panel of very deeply carved wood, through the interstices of which every whisper in the durbar hall was audible when the women all were still, and every man and movement could be seen. Yasmini took her stand close to the gilded door, and Tess and Hasamurti watched the opportunity to come beside her—no very easy matter in a room where fifty women jockeyed for recognition and a private word.

But there came a great noise of men's voices in the durbar hall, and of a roll-call answered one by one, each name being written in a vellum book, that none might say afterward he was present who was not, and none might escape responsibility. The women grew silent as a forest that rustles and shivers in the night wind, and somebody turned down the lights, so that it was easier to see through the carved panel, and not so easy to be seen. Immediately beyond the panel was a dais, or wide platform, bare of everything except a carpet that covered it from end to end. A short flight of steps from the center of it led to the durbar floor below.

The durbar floor was of polished teak, and all the columns that supported the high roof were of the same wood, carved with fantastic patterns. From the center hung a huge glass chandelier, its quivering pendants multiplying the light of a thousand candles; and in every corner of the hall were other chandeliers, and mirrors to reflect the light in all directions.

Grouped in the center of the hall were about two hundred men, all armed with sabers—men of every age and height and swarthiness, from stout, blue-bearded veterans to youths yet in their 'teens—dressed in every hue imaginable from the scarlet frock-coat, white breeches and high black boots of a *risaldar* major to the jeweled silken gala costume of the dandiest of Rajputana's youth. There was not a man present who did not rank himself the equal of all reigning kings, whatever outward deference the exigency of alien overrule compelled.

This was a race that, like the Poles, knew itself to have been conquered because of subdivision and dissension in its ranks; no lack of courage or of martial skill had brought on their subjection. Not nearly all their best were there that night—not even any of the highest placed, because of jealousy and the dread of betrayal; but there was not a priest among them, so that the chance was high that their trust would be well kept.

These were the pick of Rajputana's patriots—the men who loved the old ways, yet admitted there was virtue in an adaptation of the new. And Yasmini, with a gift for reading men's hearts that has been her secret and her source of power first and last, was reviving an ancient royal custom for them, to the end that she might lead them in altogether new ways of her own devising.

THE roll-call ended, a veteran with a jeweled aigret in his turban stood apart from the rest with his back toward the dais steps and made a speech that was received in silence, though the women peering through the panel fluttered with excitement, and the deep breathing in the durbar hall sounded like the very far-off murmur of a tide. For he rang the changes on the ancient chivalry of Rajasthan, and on the sanctity of ancient custom, and the right they had to follow what their hearts accounted good.

"And as in ancient days," he said, "our royal women chose their husbands at a durbar summoned by the king; and because in ancient times, when Rajasthan was a land of kings indeed and its royal women, as the endless pages of our history tell, stood proven and acclaimed as fit to govern, and defend, and die untarnished in the absence of their lords; therefore we now see fit to attend this durbar, and to witness and give sanction. Once again, my lords, a royal daughter of a throne of Rajasthan shall choose her husband in the sight of all of us, let come of it what may!"

He ceased, and the crowd burst into cheers. Yasmini translated his speech afterward to Tess. He said not a word of Gungadhura or of the throne of Sialpore, leaving that act of utter daring to the woman who was after all the leader of them all that night.

Now all eyes were on the dais and the door behind it. In the inner room the women stirred and whispered, while a dozen of them, putting on their veils again, gathered around Yasmini, waiting in silence for her to give the cue.

She waited long enough to whet the edge of expectation, and then nodded. Hasamurti opened the door wide and Yasmini stepped forth, a-glitter with her jewels.

"Ah-h-h!" was her greeting—the unbidden, irrepressible, astonished gasp of mixed emotion of a crowd that sees more wonder than it bargained for.

The twelve princesses took their place beside her on the dais, six on either hand. Immediately behind her Tess and Hasamurti stood.

Yasmini's other maids arranged themselves with their backs to the gilded door. She, Tess and Hasamurti were the only women there unveiled.

She stood two minutes long in silence, smiling down at them while Tess' heartbeats drummed until she lost count, Tess suspecting nervousness because of her own nerves, and not so wildly wrong.

"You're not alone," she whispered. "You've a friend behind you—two friends!"

Then Yasmini spoke.

"My lords."

The word "*bahadur*" rolled from her golden throat like chords of Beethoven's overture to "Leonori."

"You do our olden customs honor. True chivalry had nearly died since superstition and the ebb and flow of mutual mistrust began to smother it in modern practises. But neither priest nor alien could make it shame for maidenhood to choose which way its utmost honor lies.

"Ye know your hearts' delight. Goodness, love and soundless fealty are the attributes your manhood hungers for. Of those three elements is womanhood.

"And so, as Shri—goddess of all good fortune—comes ever to her loved one of her own accord and dowers him with richer blessing than he dreamed, true womanhood should choose her mate, and, having chosen, honor him. My lords, I choose, in confidence of your nobility and chivalry!"

Pausing for a minute then, to let the murmur of assent die down, and waiting while they stamped and shuffled into three long lines, she descended the steps alone, moving with a step so dignified, yet modest, that no memory of past events could persuade Tess it was artistry.

She felt—Tess was sure of it, and swore to it ever afterward—in her heart of hearts the full spiritual and profound significance of what she did.

Beginning at the left end of the first line, she passed slowly and alone before them, looking each man in the eyes, smiling at each one as she passed him. Not a man but had his full meed of attention and the honor due to him who brings the spirit of observance and the will to help another man succeed.

Back along the second line she went, with the same supreme dignity and modesty, omitting not even the oldest veteran, nor letting creep into her smile the veriest suggestion of another sentiment than admiration for the manliness by whose leave she was doing what she did. Each man received his smile of recognition and the deference due his pride.

Then down the third line, yet more slowly, until Tess had cold chills, thinking Utirupa was not there! One by one she viewed them all, until the last man's turn came, and she took him by the hand and led him forth.

At that the whole assembly milled into a mob and reformed in double line up and down the room. The same voice that had thundered in the darkness roared again and two hundred swords leaped from their scabbards.

Under an arch of blazing steel, in silence, Yasmini and her chosen husband came to the dais and stood facing the assembly hand in hand, while the swords went back to their owners' sides and once more the crowd clustered in the center of the hall.

There was a movement in among them then. Some servants brought in baskets, and distributed them at about equal intervals amid the forest of booted legs. When the servants had left the hall Yasmini spoke.

"My lords, in the presence of you all I vow love, honor, fealty and a wife's devotion to the prince of my choosing—to my husband who shall be—who now is by Ghandarwa ceremony; for I went to him of my own free will by night. My lords, I present to you——"

There was a pause while every man present caught his breath, and the women rustled like a dove-cote behind the panel.

"—Gunga Khatiawara Dhuleep Rhakapushi Utirupa Singh—Maharaja of Sialpore!"

Two hundred swords sprang clear again. The chandeliers rattled and the beams shook to the thunder of two hundred throats.

"*Rung Ho!*" they roared.

"*Rung Ho!*"

"*Rung Ho!*" bringing down their right feet with a stamp all together that shook the building.

WHEN the baskets were cut open by the swords' points and they flung flowers at the dais, swamping it in jasmine and sweet-smelling buds, until the carpet was not visible. The same black-bearded veteran who had spoken first mounted the dais and hung garlands on Yasmini and her prince, and again the hall shook to the roar of acclamation and the sharp ringing of keen steel.

But Yasmini had not finished all she had to say. When the shouting died and the blades returned to scabbards, her voice again stirred their emotions, strangely quiet and yet reaching all ears with equal resonance, like the note of a hidden bell.

"And since, my lords, in olden days it happened often that a Rajput woman held and buttressed up her husband's throne, honoring him and Rajputana with her courage and her wit, and daring even in the arts of war, so now. This prince shall have his throne by woman's wit. Before another full moon rises he shall sit throned in the palace of his ancestors; and ye who love royal Rajasthan shall answer whether I chose wisely, in the days to come!"

They answered then and there to the utmost of their lungs. And while the hall resounded to the crash and clangor of applause she let go Utirupa's hand, bowed low to him, and vanished through the gilded door in the midst of her attendant women.

For two hours after that she was the center of a vortex of congratulation—questions—whisperings—laughter and advice, while the women flocked about her and she introduced Tess to them one by one. Tess, hardly understanding a word of what was said to her, was never made so much of in her life, sharing honors with Yasmini, almost as much a novelty as she—a Western woman, spirited behind the purdah by the same new alchemy that made a girl of partly foreign birth, and so without caste in the Hindu sense of it, revive a royal custom with its antecedents rooted in the very rocks of time. It was a night of breathless novelty.

There were the inevitable sweetmeats—the inevitable sugared drinks. Then the elephants again, and torches under the mysterious trees, with a sabered escort plunging to the right and left. The same torch-lit faces peering from the village doors and walls; and at last the gate again in the garden wall, and a bolt shot home, and silence. Then:

"Did I do well?" Yasmini asked, leaning at last on Tess. "Oh, my sister! Without you there to lend me courage I had failed!"

HOW about the door? Did somebody lock it?
"I," said the chairman, "had the key in my pocket."
Who shut the windows? "I," said the vice.
"I shut the window; it seemed to me wise."
"I," said the clerk, "looked under the table
And out on the balcony under the gable."
Then who let the secret out? Who overheard?
Maybe a mouse, or the flies, or a bird!

CHAPTER XVII

"Suppose I lock the door?"

TOM TRIPE felt like a new man, and his whiskers crackled with self-satisfaction. For one thing, his dog Trotters was back again—sore-footed, it was true, and unable at present to follow him on his rounds;

and rather badly scratched where a leopard must have missed his spring on the moon-lit desert; but asleep in the stable litter, on the highroad to recovery.

Tom had ridden that morning, first to Dick Blaine up at the gold-mine, because he was a friend and needed good news of his wife; then across the bridge to Samson, straightening out the crumpled letter from Yasmini as he rode, and chuckling to himself at the thought of mystifying the commissioner. And it all worked out the way he hoped, even to the offer of a drink—good brandy—Hennessey's Three Star.

"How did you manage it?" asked Samson. "The princess has disappeared. There's a rumor she's over the border in the next State. Gungadhura has seized her palace and rifled it. How did you get my letter to her, and her answer so swiftly?"

"Ah, sir," said Tom Tripe mischievously, "we in the native service have our little compensations—our little ways and means."

That was better than frankincense and myrrh, to mystify a genuine commissioner! Tom rode back to his quarters turning over the taste of brandy in his mouth—he had made a martial raid on Samson's tantalus—and all aglow with good humor.

Not so Samson. The commissioner was irritable, and more so now that he opened the scented letter Tom had brought. It was deuced curt, it seemed to him, and veiled a sort of suggested laughter, if there was anything insinuative in polite phrases. It ran:

> The Princess Yasmini Omanoff Singh hastens to return thanks for Sir Roland Samson's kind letter. She is not, however, afraid of imprisonment or of undue pressure; and as for her secret, that is safe as long as the river runs through the State of Sialpore.

Not a word more. He frowned at the letter, and read and reread it, sniffing at the scent and holding up the paper to the light, so that Sita Ram very nearly had a chance to read it through the knot-hole in the door.

The last phrase was the puzzler. It read at first like a boast—like one of those picturesque expressions with which the Eastern mind enjoys to overstate its case.

But he reflected on it. As an orientalist of admitted distinction he had long ago concluded that hyperbole in the East is always based on some fact hidden in the user's mind, often without the user's knowledge. He had written a paper on that very subject, which the *Spectator* printed with favorable editorial comment; and Mendelsohn, K.C., had written him a very agreeable letter stating that his own experience in criminal cases amply bore out the theory. Samson rang the desk bell for Sita Ram.

"Get me the map of the province."

Sita Ram held it by two corners under the drafty punkah while Samson traced the boundaries with his finger. It was exactly as he thought. Without that little palace and its grounds the State of Sialpore would be bounded exactly by the river. Take away the so-called River Palace with the broad acres surrounding it, and the river would no longer run through the State of Sialpore. That would be the end, then, of the safety of the secret. There was food for reflection there.

What if the famous Treasure of Sialpore were buried somewhere in the grounds of the River Palace! Somewhere, for instance, among those gigantic pipal-trees.

He folded the map and returned it to Sita Ram.

"I'm expecting half a dozen officers presently. Show them in the minute they come. And—ah—you'd better lock that middle door."

Sita Ram dutifully locked the door on Samson's side, and drew the curtain over it. There was a small hole in the curtain, of peculiar shape—moths had been the verdict when Samson first noticed it, and Sita Ram had advised him to indent for some preventive of the pests; which Samson did, and the hole did not grow any greater afterward.

SAMSON had had to call a conference, much though he disliked doing it. The rules for procedure in the case of native States included the provision of an official known as resident, whose duty was to live near the native ruler and keep a sharp eye on him.

But Samson, prince of indiscretion, had seen fit three months before to let that official go home to England on long leave, and to volunteer the double duty in his absence. The proposal having economic value, and there being no known trouble in Sialpore just then, the State Department had consented.

The worst of that was that there was no

one now in actual close touch with Gungadhura. The best of it was that there was none to share the knowledge of Samson's underlying scheme—which was after all nothing but to win high laurels for himself, by somewhat devious ways perhaps, but justified in his opinion in the circumstances.

And the very worst of it was that good form and official precedent obliged him to call a conference before recommending certain drastic action to his Government. Having no official resident to consult, he had to go through the form of consulting somebody; and the more he called in, the less likelihood there was of any one man's arrogating undue credit to himself.

They were ushered in presently by Sita Ram. Ross, the principal medical officer, came first; it was a pity he ranked so high that he could not be overlooked, but there you were. Then came Sir Hookum Bannerjee, judge of the circuit court—likely to have a lot to say without much meaning in it, and certainly anxious to please.

Next after him Sita Ram showed in Norwood, superintendent of police; one disliked calling in policemen, they were so interfering and tactless, but Norwood had his rights. Then came Topham, acting assistant to Samson, loaned from another State to replace young Wilkinson, home on sick leave, and full-back on the polo team—a quiet man as a rule, anxious to get back to his own district, and probably reasonably safe.

Last came Lieutenant-Colonel Willoughby de Wing—small, brusk and florid—acting in command of the 88th Sikh Lancers, and preferring that to any other task this side of heaven or ——; "nothing to do with politics, my boy—not built that way—don't like 'em—never understood 'em anyhow. Soldiering's my business."

It was well understood it was to be a secret conference. The invitations had been marked, "Secret."

"SUPPOSE I lock the door," suggested Samson by way of additional reminder; and he did that, resuming his chair with an expression that permitted just the least suggestion of a serious situation to escape him.

But he was smiling amiably, and his curled mustache did not disguise the corners of a wilful mouth.

"There is proof conclusive," he began, "—I've telegrams here that you may see in confidence—that Gungadhura has been trafficking with northwest tribes. He has sent them money and made them promises. There isn't a shade of doubt of it. The evidence is black. The question is, what's to be done?"

They passed the telegrams from hand to hand; Norwood looking rather supercilious. (The police could handle espionage of that sort so much better.) But it was the youngest man's place to speak first.

"Depose him, I suppose, and put his young son in his place," suggested Topham. "There's plenty of precedent."

The doctor shook his head.

"I know Gungadhura. He's a bad strain. It's physiological. I've made a study of these things, and I'm as certain as that I sit here that any son of Gungadhura's would eventually show the same traits as his sire. If you can get rid of Gungadhura, get rid of his whole connection by all means."

"What should be done with the sons then?" asked Sir Hookum Bannerjee, father of half a dozen budding lawyers.

"Oh, send 'em to school in England, I suppose," said Samson. "There's precedent for that, too. But there's another point. Mukhum Dass the money-lender has been foully murdered, struck down by a knife from behind by some one who incidentally relieved him of his money. Either a case of simple robbery or else——"

"Or else what?" Colonel Willoughby de Wing screwed home his monocle. "*That's* as obvious as twice two. That rascal Mukhum Dass was bound to die violently sooner or later. He was notoriously the worst usurer and title-jumper on this side of India. He charged me once a total of eighty-five per cent. for a small loan—and legally, too; kept within the law. I know him."

"On the other hand," said Samson, "I've been informed that the cellar of the house at present occupied by those Americans on the hill—the gold-miner, you know—Blaine—was burgled last Sunday morning. Blaine himself complained to me.

"It seems that he had given Gungadhura leave to search the cellar, at Gungadhura's request, for what purpose Blaine professes not to know. Blaine himself, you may remember, lunched and dined at the club last Sunday and gave three of us a rather costly lesson in his national game of poker. It took place while he was with us at the club.

"He has been able to discover, by cross-examining some witnesses—beggars, I believe, who haunt the house—that Mukhum Dass got to the place ahead of Gungadhura, burgled the cellar, removed something of great value to Gungadhura and went off with it. On the way home he was murdered."

"The murder of Mukhum Dass was known very soon afterward, of course, to the police," said Norwood. "But we can't do anything across the river without orders. Why didn't Mr. Blaine bring his complaint and evidence to me?"

"Because I asked him not to," answered Samson. "We're mixed up here in a political case."

"—— all politics!" growled Willoughby de Wing.

"If it can be proved that Gungadhura murdered Mukhum Dass, or caused him to be murdered, I should say, 'Arrest him, try the brute and hang him,' " said Topham. "Confound these native princes that take law into their own hands!"

"I should say, 'Let's prove the case if we can,' " said Samson, " 'and use that for an extra argument to force Gungadhura's abdication.' No need to hang him. If he'd killed a princess or an Englishman we'd be obliged to take extreme measures; but as de Wing says Mukhum Dass was an awful undesirable.

"If we hanged Gungadhura, we'd almost *have* to put one of his five sons on the throne to succeed him. If he abdicates we can please ourselves.

"I think I can persuade him to abdicate—if Norwood, for instance, knows of any way to gather secret evidence about that murder—secret, you understand me, Norwood. We need that for a sword of Damocles."

"Who's to succeed him in that case?" asked Ross, the P.M.O.

"I shall recommend Utirupa Singh," said Samson with his eyes alert.

Ross nodded.

"Utirupa is one of those men who make me think the Rajput race is not moribund."

"A good, clean sportsman," said Topham. "Plays a red-hot game of polo, too."

"Pays up his bets, moreover, like a gentleman," said Colonel Willoughby de Wing.

"I feel sure," said Sir Hookum Bannerjee, seeing he was expected to say something, "that Prince Utirupa Singh would be acceptable to the Rajputs themselves, who are long weary of Gungadhura's way. But he is not married. It is a pity always that a reigning prince should be unmarried; there are so many opportunities in that case for intrigue, and for mistakes."

"Gad!" exclaimed Willoughby de Wing, dropping his monocle. "What a chance to marry him to that young Princess What's-her-name—you know the one I mean—the one that's said to masquerade in men's clothes and dance like the ——, and all that kind of thing. I know nothing of politics, but—what a chance!"

"God forbid!" laughed Samson. "That young woman is altogether too capable for trouble without a throne to play with! I suspect her, as it happens, of very definite and dangerous intentions along another line connected with the throne of Sialpore.

"But I know how to disappoint her and stop her game. I intend to recommend—for the second time, by the way—that she also should be sent to Europe for a proper education.

"But the point I'm driving at is this: Are we agreed as to the proper course to take with Gungadhura?"

They nodded.

"Then, as I see it, there's no desperate hurry. Norwood will need time to gather evidence, I'll need specific facts, not hearsay, to ram down Gungadhura's throat. I'll send a wire to the high commissioner and another to Simla, embodying what we recommend, and—what do you say to sending for a battery or two?"

"Good!" said Willoughby de Wing. "A very good thought indeed. I know nothing of politics, except this; that there's nothing like guns to overawe the native and convince him that the game's up.

"Let's see—who'd come with the guns? Cockham, wouldn't he? Yes, Cockham. He's my junior in the service. Yes, a very good notion indeed. Ask for two batteries by all means."

"I'll tell them not to hurry," said Samsom. "It's hot weather. They can make it in easy stages."

"By Jove!" said Topham. "They'll be here in time for the polo. Won't they beef?"

"Talking of polo, who's to captain the other side? Is it known yet?" asked de Wing.

"Utirupa," answered Topham. "There

was never any doubt of that. We've got Collins to captain us, and Latham and Cartwright, besides me. We'll give him the game of his life."

"That settles quite an important point," said Samson. "The polo tournament—after it, rather—is the time to talk to Utirupa. If we keep quiet until then—all of us, I mean—there'll be no chance of the cat jumping before the State Department pulls the string.

"I feel sure, from inside information, that Headquarters would like nothing known about this *coup d'état* until it's consummated. Explanations afterward, and the fewer the better. Have a drink, anybody?"

* * *

IN THE outer office beyond the curtain Sita Ram cautiously refitted the knot into its hole, and sat down to write hurriedly while details were fresh in mind. Ten minutes afterward, when the conference had broken up in small-talk, he asked permission to absent himself for an hour or two. He said he had a debt to pay across the river, to a man whose wife was ill.

One hour and a half later by Sita Ram's wrist-watch, Ismail, an Afridi gatekeeper at present apparently without a job, started off on a racing camel full pelt for the border, with a letter in his pocket addressed to a merchant by way of ostensible business, and ten rupees for solace to the desert police. Tucked away in the ample folds of his turban was a letter to Yasmini, giving Sita Ram's accurate account of what had happened at the secret conference.

SAFE rules for defeating a rascal are three,
And the first of them all is, Appear to agree.
The second is, Boggle at points that don't matter,
Hold out for expense and emolument fatter.
The third is, Put wish-to-seem-wise on the shelf
And keep your eventual plan to yourself.
Giving heed to the three with your voice and eyes level
You can turn the last trick by out-trumping the devil.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Be discreet, Blaine—please be discreet!"

MEANWHILE Gungadhura was not inactive, nor without spies of his own, who told him more or less vaguely that trouble was cooking for him in the English camp. A letter he expected from the Mahsudi tribe had not reached him. It was the very letter he had hoped to show to Samson in proof of Mahsudi villainy and his own friendship; but he rather feared it had fallen into secret-service hands, in which case he might have a hard time to clear himself.

Then there was the murder of Mukhum Dass. He had not been able to resist that opportunity when Patali reported to him what Mukhum Dass had been seen to make away with. And now he had the secret of the Treasure in his possession—implicit directions, and a map!

He suspected they had been written by some old priest, or former raja's servant, in the hope of a chance for treachery, and hidden away by Jengal Singh with the same object. There were notes on the margin by Jengal Singh. The thing was obviously genuine.

But the worst of it was that Patali knew all about it now; and that cursed idiot Blaine had complained to Samson of burglary after he learned that the cellar door was broken open by the money-lender. Why hadn't Blaine come to himself, Gungadhura wondered, and been satisfied with a string of promises? That would have been the courteous thing to do.

Instead of that, now Samson's spies were nosing about, and only the gods knew what they might discover. The man who had done the murder was safely out of the way—probably in Delhi by that time, or on his way there; but that interfering ass Norwood might be awake for once; and if the murderer should happen to get caught, and should confess—as hired murderers do sometimes—it would need an awful lot of expert lying, and money too, to clear himself.

With funds—ample, extravagant supplies of ready cash—he felt he could even negotiate the awkward circumstance that he himself was deeply in debt to Mukhum Dass at the time of the murder. Money and brains combined can accomplish practically anything. Delhi, and Bombay and Calcutta were full of clever lawyers.

The point was, he must hurry. And he did not dare trust any one with knowledge of his secret—except Patali, who had worried out some and guessed the rest—because of the obvious risk of Samson's getting wind of it through spies and so forestalling him. He felt he had Samson's character estimated nicely.

Arguing with himself—distracted between fear on one hand and Patali's importunity on the other—he reached the conclusion that Dick Blaine was his only safe reliance. The American seemed to have an obsession for written contracts, and for enforcing the last letter of them.

Well and good; he would make another contract with Dick Blaine, and told Patali so, she agreeing that the American was the safest tool to use. She saw herself already with her arms up to the shoulders in the Treasure of Sialpore.

"The American has few friends," she said. "He smokes a pipe, and thinks, and now that they say his wife has gone away there is less chance than ever of his talking."

"He will need to be paid," said Gungadhura.

"There will be plenty to pay him with," she answered, her eyes gleaming.

So Gungadhura, with his face still heavily bandaged, drove in a lumbering closed carriage up the rough track to the tunnel Dick had blasted in the hillside. The carriage could not go close to the tunnel-mouth, because the track was only wide enough just there for the dump-carts to come and go. So he got out and walked into the tunnel unattended. Dick was used to seeing him about the works in any case, and never objected to explaining things, several times over on occasion.

He found Dick superintending the careful erection of a wall of rock and cement, and he thought for an instant that the American looked annoyed to see him there. But Dick assumed his poker expression the moment afterward, and you couldn't have guessed whether he was glad or sorry.

"You block the tunnel?" the maharaja asked.

"The vein's disappeared," said Dick. "The rock's all faulty here this and that way. I'm shoring up the end to keep the roof from falling down on us, and next I'm going to turn sharp at right angles and try to find the end of the vein where it broke off."

"You are too near the fort in any case," said the maharaja. "No use driving under the fort."

"What do you propose I *should* do?" Dick answered, a trifle testily.

"Dig elsewhere."

"What, and scrap this outlay?"

"Yes. I have a reason. A particular—eh—reason."

Dick nodded, poker face set solid.

THE maharaja paused. His advantage was that his face was all smothered in the bandages, and the dim light in the tunnel was another good ally.

His back too was toward the entrance, so that the American's chance of reading between the words was remarkably slight. Dick's back was against the uncompleted masonry.

"Could I—eh—count on you for—eh—very absolute silence?"

"I talk like that parrot in the story," Dick answered.

"You—eh—know a little now of Sialpore, Mr. Blaine. You—eh—understand how easily—eh—rumors get about. A little—eh—foundation and—eh—upside down pyramids of fancy—eh? You comprehend me?"

"Sure. I get you."

"Eh—you have a good working party."

"Fine!" said Dick. "Just about broke in. Got the gang working pretty well to rights at last."

"Would you—eh— It would take a long time to get such another party of laborers—eh—trained to work well and swiftly?"

"Months!" said Dick. "Unless you've got tame wizards up your sleeve."

"Eh—I was wondering—eh—whether you would be content to—eh—take your working party and—eh—do a little work for me elsewhere?"

"I'm right set on puzzling out this fault in the reef," Dick answered promptly. "My contract reads——"

"For compensation, of course," said Gungadhura. "You would be adequately—eh— There could be a contract drawn."

"I wouldn't cancel this one—not for hard cash," Dick retorted.

"No, no. I do not ask that. It would—eh—not be necessary."

"Well then, what's the proposal?"

Dick settled himself back against the masonry, crossed his feet and knocked out ashes from his pipe. The maharaja walked twice ten yards toward the entrance and back again.

"How long would it take you—eh—to—eh—what was it you said?—to puzzle out this fault?"

"No knowing."

"A short—eh—additional delay will hardly matter?"

"Not if I kept the gang in harness. 'Twouldn't pay to let the teamwork slide. Costs too much in time and trouble to break 'em in again."

"Then—eh—will you go and dig for me elsewhere?"

"On what terms?"

"The same terms."

"You pay all expenses and— What am I to dig for?"

"Gold."

"Do I get my percentage of the gross of all gold won?"

"Yes. But because this is a certainty and—eh—I pay all expenses—eh—of course in—eh—return for secrecy you—eh—should be well paid, but—eh—a certain stated sum should be sufficient, or a much smaller percentage."

"Suppose we get down to figures?" Dick suggested.

"Fifty thousand rupees, or one per cent."

"At my option?"

Gungadhura nodded. Dick whistled.

"There'd have to be a time-limit. I can't stay and dig forever for a matter of fifty thousand dibs."

Gungadhura grew emphatic at that point, using both clenched fists to beat the air.

"Time-limit? There must be no time lost at all! Have you promised to be silent? Have you promised not to breathe one little word to anybody? Not to your own wife? Not to Samson? Above all not to Samson? Then I will tell you."

Gungadhura glanced about him like a stage conspirator.

"Go on," said Dick. "There's nobody here knows English except you and me."

"You are to dig for the Treasure of Sialpore! The Treasure of my ancestors!"

"Fifty thousand dibs—or one per cent. at my option, eh? Make it two per cent. and draw your contract."

"Two per cent. is too much."

"Get another man to dig, then."

"Very well, I make it two per cent. But you must hurry."

"Draw your contract. Time-limit how long?"

"Two weeks—three weeks—not more than a month at the very utmost. You draw the contract in English, and I will sign it this afternoon. You must begin to dig tomorrow at dawn."

"Where?"

"In the grounds of the River Palace—across the river—beginning close to the great pipal-trees."

"They're all outside the palace wall. How in thunder can I keep secret about that?"

"You must begin inside the palace wall and tunnel underground."

"Dirt's all soft down there," said Dick. "We'll need to prop up as we go. Lots of lumber. Cost like blazes. Where's the lumber coming from?"

"Cut down the pipal-trees."

"Man—we'd need a mill."

"There is no lumber—not in such a hurry."

"What'll we do then? Can't have accidents."

"Pah! The lives of a few coolies, Mr. Blaine——"

"Nothing doing, maharaja *sahib.* Murder's not my long suit."

"Then pull the palace down and use the beams."

"You'd have to put that in writing."

"Include it in the contract then. Now, have we agreed?"

"I guess so. If I think of anything else I'll talk it over with you when I bring the contract round this afternoon."

"Good. Then I will give you the map."

"Better give me it now, so I can study it."

"The—eh—risk of that is too great, Mr. Blaine."

"Seems to me your risk is pretty heavy as it is," Dick retorted. "If I was going to spill your secret I could do it now, map or no map."

THREE times again Gungadhura paced the tunnel, torn between mistrust, impatience and anxiety. At last he thrust his bandaged face very close to Dick's and spoke in a level, hard voice, smiling thinly.

"Very well, Mr. Blaine. I will entrust the map to you. But let me first tell you certain things—certain quite true things. Every attempt to steal that Treasure has ended in ill luck. There have been many.

"All the conspirators have died—by poison—by dagger—by the sword—by snake-bite—by bullets—they have all died—always! Do you understand?"

Dick shuddered in spite of himself.

"Then take the map!"

Gungadhura turned his back and fumbled in the folds of his semi-European clothing. He produced the silver tube after a minute, removed the cap from one end and shook out a piece of parchment. There was a dull crimson stain on it.

"The blood of a man who tried to betray the secret," said Gungadhura. "See—the knife of an assassin pierced the tube, and blood entered through the hole. It happened long ago."

But he did not pass the tube to Dick that he might examine the knife-mark.

"These notes on the edge of the map are probably in the hand of Jengal Singh, who stole it. He died of snake-bite more than a year ago. They are in Persian; he notes that four of the trees are dead and only their roots remain; therefore that measurements must allow for that.

"You must find the roots of the last tree, Mr. Blaine, and measure carefully from both ends, digging afterward in a straight line from inside the palace wall by compass. Is it clear?"

"I guess so. Leave it with me and I'll study it."

The maharaja kept the tube and left the parchment in Dick's hands.

"This afternoon then?"

"This afternoon," said Dick.

When he had gone Dick resumed the very careful building of the masonry, placing the last stones with his own hands. Then he went out into the sunlight, to sit on a rock and examine the parchment with a little pocket magnifying-glass that he always carried for business purposes. He studied it for ten minutes.

"It's clever," he said at last. "Dashed clever. It 'ud fool the Prince of Wales!"

Dick had astonishing delusions as to the supposed omniscience of the heir to the throne of England.

"The ink looks old, and it's not metallic ink. The parchment's as old as Methuselah. I'll take my oath on that. There's even different ink been used for the map and the margin notes.

"But that's new blood or my name's Mike. That blood's not a week old. Phew! I bet it's that poor devil Mukhum Dass.

"Now—let's figure on this: Mukhum Dass burgled my house, and was murdered about an hour afterward. I think—I can't swear, because he didn't let me hold it, but I *think*—that tube in Gungadhura's hand was the very identical one that I hid under the cellar floor—that Mukhum Dass stole—and that the maharaja now carries in his pocket. This map has blood on it. What's the inference?"

He filled his pipe and smoked reflectively.

"The inference is, that I'm accessory after the fact to the money-lender's murder unless——"

He finished the pipe and knocked out the ashes.

"—unless I break my promise, and hand this piece of evidence over to Norwood. I guess he's arch high-policeman here."

As if the guardian angel of Dick's conscience were at work that very minute to torment him there came the sound of an approaching horse, and Samson turned the corner into view.

"Oh, hullo, Blaine! How's the gold developing?"

"So-so. Have they found the murderer of Mukhum Dass yet?"

Samson dropped his reins to light a cigar, and took his time about it.

"Not exactly."

"Hmn! You either exactly find the murderer, or you don't."

"We've our suspicions."

"Leading anywhere?"

"Too soon to say."

"If I was to offer to put you next to a piece of pretty clear evidence, how'd that suit you?"

Samson had to relight the cigar in order to get opportunity to read Dick's face before he answered.

"I don't think so, Blaine, thank you—at least not at present. If you've direct evidence of an eye-witness, of course——"

"Nothin' like that," said Dick.

"Well, I'll be candid with you, Blaine. We know quite well who the murderer is. At the right moment we shall land on him hammer and tongs. But you see—we need to choose the right moment, for political reasons. Now—technically speaking—all evidence in criminal cases ought to go to the police, and the police might act too hastily—you understand me?"

"If you know who the man is, of course," said Dick, "there's nothing more I need do."

"Except to be discreet, Blaine. Please be discreet. We shall get the man. Don't doubt it. You and your wife have set us all an example here of minding nobody's business except your own.

"I'd be awfully obliged if you'd keep yourself as far as possible out of this mess. Should we need any further evidence than we've got already I'd ask you for it, of course."

"Suits me all right," said Dick. "I'm mum."

"Thanks awfully, Blaine. Can I offer you a cigar? I'm on my way to take a look at the fort. Seems like an anachronism, doesn't it, for us to keep an old-fashioned fort like this so near our own border in native territory? Care to come with me? Well, so long then—see you at the club again, I suppose?"

Samson rode on.

"A narrow squeak, that!" said Dick to himself, stowing away the map that he had held the whole time in his right hand in full view of the commissioner.

THE EAST TO COLUMBIA

SISTER COLUMBIA, wonderful sister,
  Weariless wings on aerial way!
Tell us the lore of thy loftiness, sister.
  We of the dark are astir for the day!
Give us the gift of thy marvelous wings;
Spell us the charm that Columbia sings!

Oversea sister, affluent sister,
  Queen inexclusive, though out of our reach!
How is thy genius ever unruffled?
  What is the talisman altitudes teach?
Measureless meed of ability thine;
What is the heart of thy heart's design?

How shall we learn of it? How shall we follow?
  Heavy the burden of earth where we lie!
Only a glimpse of thy miracle stirs us;
  Stay in our wallow and teach us to fly!
How shall we spring to Columbia's call?
Oh, that thy wings could unweary us all!

CHAPTER XIX

"I am as simple as the sunlight!"

TESS was in something very near to paradise, if paradise is constant assuaging of the curiosity amid surroundings that conduce to idleness. There were men on that countryside in plenty who would not have dared admit a Western woman into their houses; but even those could hardly prevent wives and daughters from visiting Yasmini in the perfectly correct establishment she kept. And there were other men, more fearless of convention, who were willing that Tess, if veiled, should cross their private thresholds.

So there followed a round of visits and return calls, of other marvelous rides by elephant at night, because the daytime was too hot for comfort, and, oftener, long drives in latticed carriages, with footmen up behind and an escort to ride before and swear at the lethargic bullock-men—carriages that bumped along the country roads on strange, old-fashioned springs.

Yasmini was welcome everywhere, and in the cautious, tenfold-guarded Eastern way, kept open house. The women reveled in her free ideas and in the wit with which she heaped scorn on the priest-made fashions that have kept all India in chains for centuries, mocking the priests, as some thought, at the risk of blasphemy.

Almost as much as in Yasmini's daring they took ingenuous delight in Tess, persuading Yasmini to interpret question and reply or, very rarely, bringing with them some duenna who had a smattering of English.

All imprisoned folk, and especially women in the shuttered zenanas of the East, develop a news sense of their own that passes the comprehension of free-ranging mortals. They were astonishingly well informed about the outer world—even the far-flung outer world—yet asked the most childish questions; and only a few of them could have written their own names—they, who were titled ladies of a land of ancient chivalry.

"Wait until I am maharanee," Yasmini said. "The women have always ruled India. Women rule the English, though the English hate the thought of it and make believe otherwise. With the aid of women I will change the face of India—the women and the gods."

But she was careful of her promises, holding out no prospects that would stir premature activity among the ranks she counted on.

"Promise the gods too much," she said, "and the gods overwhelm you. They like to serve, which is their business, not to have you squandering on them. Tell the women they are rulers, and they will start to destroy their empire by making public what is secret. If you tell the men that the women rule them, what will the men do?"

"Shut them up all the closer, I suppose," suggested Tess.

"Is that what they ever did? No. They will choose for them certain offices they can not fill because of inexperience, and put the noisiest women in them, and make mock of them, and laugh. Not for a long time yet must India know who rules her."

"Child, where did you learn all your philosophy?" Tess asked her one night when they were watching the stars from the bedroom window-seat.

"Oh, men taught me this and that thing, and I have always reversed it and believed the opposite. Why do men teach? To make you free, or to bind you to their own wheel?

"The English teach that English ways are good for the world. I answer that the world has been good to England, and the English would like to keep it so.

"The pundits say we should study the philosophies. They made me study hours and hours when I was little. Why? To bind me to the wheel of their philosophy, and keep me subject to them. I say philosophy is good for pundits, as a pond is good for frogs; but shall I be a frog, too, and croak about the beauties of the mud?

"The priests say we should obey them, and pray, and make offerings, and keep the religious law. I say that religion is good for priests, which is why they cherish it, and add to it, and persuade foolish women to believe it. As for the gods, if they are anything they are our servants."

"Your husband is going to have an interesting time," laughed Tess.

Yasmini's blue eyes suddenly turned soft and serious.

"Do you think I can not be a wife?" she asked. "Do you suppose there is no mother-love in me? Do you think I do not understand how a man needs cherishing? Do you think I will preach to my husband, or oppose his plans?

"No! I will do as the gods do when the priests are asleep. I will let him go his own way, and will go it with him, never holding back; and little by little he will learn that I have understanding. Little by little he will grow into knowledge of the things I know—and he will be a very great man."

THERE were no visits whatever from Utirupa, for the countryside would have been scandalized. Only, flowers came every day in enormous quantities; and there was a wealth of horses, carriages, jewels and armed men at his bride's disposal that proved he had not forgotten her existence or her needs.

She had claimed marriage to him by Gandharwa rite, and he had tacitly consented, but she was not ready yet to try conclusions with the secret, octopus influence of the priests; and there was another reason.

"If it should get to Samson's ears that he and I are married, that would be the end of his chance of the throne of Sialpore. Samson is English of the English. He would oppose to the end the nomination of a maharaja whose wife has notions of her own—as I am known to have.

"They like him—my husband—because he plays good polo, and will bet with them, and can play cricket; and because he seems to follow no special line of politics. But if it were known he had a clever wife—me for wife—they would have none of him. I shall be a surprize for them when the die is cast."

Tess was in almost daily communication with Dick, for, what with Tom Tripe and Sita Ram and about a dozen other sworn accomplices, Yasmini had messages coming and going all the time. Camels used to arrive long after dark, and letters were brought in, smelly with the sweat of loyal riders who had hidden them from too inquisitive police.

Most of them carried back a scribbled word for Dick. But he said nothing about the Treasure in his curt, anonymous, unsigned replies, being nervous about sending messages at all.

Only, when in one letter he mentioned digging in another place, and Tess read the sentence aloud, Yasmini squealed with delight. The next day her own advices confirmed the hint, Sita Ram sending a long account of new developments and adding that "Samson *sahib* is much exercised in mind about it."

"All goes well!" Yasmini belled in her golden voice. "Samson has seen the hidden meaning of my letter. If I had told him bluntly where the Treasure is, he would have laughed and forgotten it. But because he thinks he reads the secret of my mind, he flatters himself and falls into the trap. Now we have Samson caught, and all is well."

"It would be a very canny person who could read the secret of your mind, I should say," laughed Tess.

"I am as simple as the sunlight!" Yasmini answered honestly. "It is Samson who is dark, not I."

Yasmini began to be very busy after that, making ready for departure and giving a thousand orders to dependents she could trust.

"At the polo game," she asked Tess, "when the English ask questions as to where you have been and what you saw, what will you tell them?"

"Why not the truth? Samson expressly asked me to cultivate your acquaintance."

"Splendid! Tell them you traveled on camel-back by night across the desert with me. By the time they have believed that we will think of more to add to it.

"We return by elephant to Sialpore together, timing our arrival for the polo game. There we separate. You watch the game together with your husband. I shall be in a closed carriage—part of the time. I shall be there *all* the time, but I don't think you will see me."

"But you say they have rifled your palace. Where will you sleep?" Tess asked.

"At your house on the hill."

"But that is in Gungadhura's territory. Aren't you afraid of him?"

"Of Gungadhura? I? I never was! But now whoever fears him would run from a broken snake.

"I have word that the fool has murdered Mukhum Dass the money-lender. You may trust the English to draw his teeth nicely for him after that. Gungadhura is like a tiger in a net he can not break."

"He might send men to break into the house," Tess argued.

"There will be sharper eyes than any of his watching."

But Tess was alarmed at the prospect. She did not mind in the least what the English might have to say about it afterward; but to have her little house the center of nocturnal feuds, with her husband using his six-shooters, and Heaven only knew what bloodshed resulting, was more of a prospect than she looked forward to.

"Sister," said Yasmini, taking her by both hands, "I must use your house. There is no other place."

No one could refuse her when her deep blue eyes grew soft and pleading, let alone Tess, who had lived with her and loved her for a week.

"Very well," she answered; and Yasmini's eyes softened and brightened even more.

"I shall not forget!"

* * *

GETTING ready was no child's play. It was to be a leisurely procession in the olden style, with tents, servants, and all the host of paraphernalia and hangers-on that that entails; not across the desert this time, but around the edge of it, the way the polo ponies went, and out of Gungadhura's reach.

For, however truly Yasmini might declare that she was not afraid of Gungadhura—and she vowed she never boasted—she was running no unnecessary risks; it takes a long time for the last rats to desert a sinking ship—the obstinate go down with it—and just as long for the last assassins to change politics. She was eager to run all the risks when that was the surest strategy, but was cautious otherwise.

The secret of her safety lay in the inviolable privacy surrounding women's life in all that part of India—privacy that the English have respected partly because of their own inherent sense of personal retirement; partly because it was the easiest way and saved trouble; but mainly because India's women have no ostensible political power, and there is politics enough without bringing new millions more potential agitators into light. So word of her life among the women did not travel swiftly to official ears, as that of a male intriguer would certainly have done.

Utirupa was busy all day long with polo, and the Powers That Be were sure of it, and pleased. What Gungadhura knew, or guessed, was another matter; but Gungadhura had his own hands full just then.

So they formed part of a procession that straggled along the miles, of elephants, camels and groups of ponies, carts loaded with tents, chattering servants, parties of Rajput gentlemen, beggars, hangers-on, retainers armed with ancient swords, mountebanks, several carriage-loads of women, who could sing and dance and were as particular about their veiling as if Lalun were not their ancestress; the inevitable fakirs, camel-loads of entertainers, water-carriers, sheep, asses, and bullock-drawn, squeaking two-wheeled carts aburst with all that men and animals could eat. Three days and nights of circus life, as Tess described it afterward to Dick.

Yasmini and Tess rode part of the way on an elephant, lying full length in the howdah with a view of all the countryside, starting before dawn and resting through the long heat of the day. But monotony formed no part of Yasmini's scheme of life, and daring was the very breath she breathed.

Most of the time they rode horseback together, disguised as men and taking to the fields whenever other parties drew too close. But sometimes Yasmini left Tess on the elephant, and mingled freely with the crowd, her own resourcefulness and intimate knowledge of the language and the customs enough protection.

Nights were the amazing time. A great camp spread out under ancient trees—bonfires glowing everywhere, and native followers squatted around them—long, whinnying horse-lines—elephants, great gurgling shadows, swaying at their pickets—shouting, laughter, music—and over all soft purple darkness and the stars.

For it was something more than a mere polo tournament that they were traveling to. It had grown out of a custom, abolished by the Government, of traveling once a year to Sialpore to air and consider grievances—a custom dating from long before the British occupation, when the princes of the different States were all in rival camps and that was about the only opportunity to meet on reasonably friendly terms.

In later years it had looked like developing into a focus of political solidity; so some ingenious commissioner had introduced the polo element, eliminating item after item all the rest. Then the date had been changed to the early hot weather, in order to reduce attendance; but the only effect that had was to keep away the English from outlying provinces.

It was the one chance that part of Rajputana had to get together, and the Rajputs swarmed to the tournament—along the main trunk road that the English had reconstructed in early days for the swifter movement of their guns. (It did not follow any particular trade route, although trade had found its way afterward along it.)

Yasmini saw Utirupa every night, she apparently as much a man as he in turban and the comfortable Rajput costume—shorter by a head, but as straight-standing and as agile. Tess and Hasamurti used to watch them under the trees, ready to give the alarm in case of interruption, sometimes near enough to catch the murmured flow of confidence uniting them in the secrecy of sacred, unconforming interviews.

It was common knowledge that Yasmini was in the camp; but she was always supposed to be tented safely on the outskirts, with her women and a guard of watchful servants all about her. There was no risk of an affront to her in any case; it was known that Utirupa would attend to that.

Each night between the bonfires there was entertainment—men who walked tight-ropes, wrestlers, a performing horse, ballad-singers and, dearest delight of all, the tellers of Eastern tales, who sat with silent rings of men about them and reeled off the old, loved, impossible adventures of the days when the gods walked with men on earth—stories of miracles, and love and derring-do, with heroes who could fight a hundred men unscathed, and heroines to set the heart on fire.

Then off again before sunrise in the cool amid the shouting and confusion of a breaking camp, with truant ponies to be hunted, and everybody yelling for his right of road, and the elephants sauntering urbanely through it all with trunks alert for pickings from the hay-carts. They were nights and days superbly gorgeous, all-entertaining, affluent of humor.

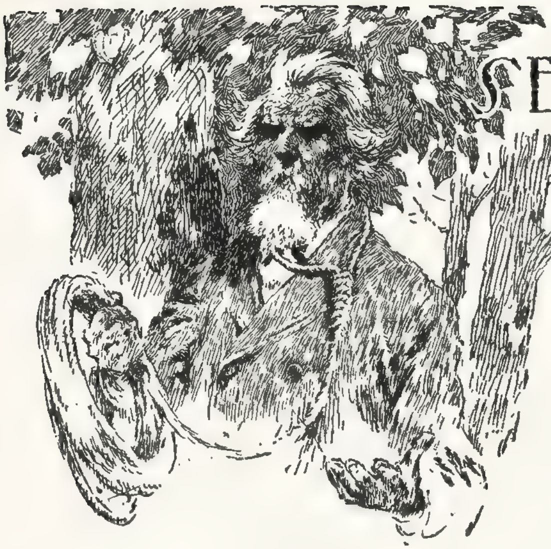
Then on the third day, nearing Sialpore toward evening, they filed past two batteries of Royal Horse Artillery, drawn up on a level place beside the road to let them by—an act of courtesy not unconnected with its own reward. It is never a bad plan to let the possibly rebellious take a long look at the engines of enforcement.

"Ah!" laughed Yasmini, up in the howdah now beside Tess on the elephant. "The guns of the gods! I *said* the gods were helping us!"

"Look like English guns to me," Tess answered.

"So think the English, too. So thinks Samson, who sent for them. So, too, perhaps Gungadhura will think when he knows the guns are coming. But I know better. I never promise the gods too much, but let them make me promises, and look on while they perform them. I tell you, those are the GUNS OF THE GODS!"

TO BE CONCLUDED



SENTENCED WITHOUT LAW

by Lewis H. Kilpatrick

IT WAS an unusual summons, coming from an unusual source, and Sheriff Hawkins ordered the mountain lad to repeat it.

"Uncle Joel Ballard he says to me, says he: 'Git on yer hoss and start to Frenchburg this minnet. Go straight to Clint Hawkins when ye git thar, and tell him that I hankers to have speech with him. I'll meet him part-way, at the mouth o' Cliffty, tomorrow noon—and I gives him my word not to have no gun on me or bring nobody along. Ax him to do the same, but be shore to fetch several yard o' rope. He'll need hit. Tell him I jest *got* to see him and fer him not to fail me tomorrow.' "

The youth added earnestly:

"I 'low ye ain't in no danger, Clint. Uncle Joel's broke considerable here o' late and he's quit traffickin' in deviltry. He'll keep his word ag'in' harmin' ye, all right."

The burly, mustached sheriff had lived too long in the Kentucky mountains, five and forty years, not to be able to detect a trap before it was sprung; but in this instance his protecting sixth sense was confused. He once had remarked to a visiting Blue Grass official—

"Up here in our county the folks who can spell a-tall spell *trouble* B-A-L-L-A-R-D"—and old Joel Ballard in particular had caused Clint Hawkins many a watchful day and wakeful night. The last time he had sought the old man he went to his cabin uninvited with a warrant in his pocket and an armed posse at his back. And only by the grace of Joel's having imbibed too freely in moonshine, did they capture him and all return home alive.

That, however, was some months ago. The sheriff had not seen him since a jury rendered the verdict "not guilty" and the acknowledged murderer of seventeen men stalked out of the court-room, free and still defiant. Clint did not relish another meeting with him under the conditions named; but he knew that the Ballards always kept their word, whether it was good or evil and something more than instinct made him decide to answer Joel's summons.

Unarmed, carrying a coil of hempen rope on his saddle-bow, the sheriff mounted his horse the next morning and was well on his way toward Cliffty Creek before sunrise. It was a long ride to where the creek drained the most distant and isolated section of the county, emptying into Red River, and for that reason he did not spare his spur. As he rounded the rock-walled bends or passed a clump of laurel, he caught himself feeling for his .38. Then, scowling, he realized that he was plunging weaponless into a country as yet unsubjected to law, whose people hated officials and officialism only as they loved unlimited freedom.

It was no insult to Clint Hawkins' reputation for fearlessness that he admitted relief when he came within sight of the trysting-place. There beside the trail at the mouth of Cliffty, true to his promise, was Joel Ballard.

He was a striking, almost majestic figure, standing to his full height of six-feet-four. His arms and legs were straight and thick with muscle; a short grizzled beard fringed the lower part of his face; his features were rugged but regular and the stabbing gray of his eyes was clouded by a pair of heavy brows.

The sheriff wondered to himself that the old man should be wearing a coat when the sun was hot; and he also noticed that he had on a store shirt and collar and what appeared to be a new slouch hat.

No words were exchanged until the horse and rider were within a rod of Joel.

"Clint, did ye bring that air rope?" he then asked abruptly.

"Yes."

The sheriff held up the hempen coil.

Joel nodded.

"All right," he said, "but we won't need hit yit. Jest hitch yer hoss to this poplar and foller me."

He waited until Clint dismounted, then led the way along a footpath up a near-by hollow, choked with blossoming rhododendron. The sheriff became suspicious.

"Where are you taking me, Joel?" he exclaimed. "I'm not hunting stills today. If there's one up here, let the revenuers find it."

The old mountaineer went some steps farther and halted.

"I'm not a-sayin' thar ain't none up here," he drawled; "but if thar is, hit's safe. This is as fur as we go, out o' hearin' o' the trail."

They were on a bench of rock, screened at every angle by rhododendron and scrub-holly, where two logs had fallen side by side. The sheriff cautiously seated himself on one log and Joel took the other facing him.

"Well, what's all this about?" demanded Clint, scrutinizing his companion with eyes as keen as his own. "I've got considerable more enemies than I have friends in these parts, and I ain't used to coming here with nothing on me but a pocket-knife."

"Ye needn't be uneasy," replied Joel. "I axed ye to leave yer gun at home jest as a sign o' faith. Last night all the Ballard boys gathered at my house and I tole 'em what I'm a-goin' to tell ye. I made 'em sw'ar solemn not to pester ye as ye come along today and not to hold hit ag'in' ye when ye have to do yer duty. Thar ain't a man amongst 'em who won't keep his oath."

Clint Hawkins nibbled the tips of his mustache and waited. He understood this strange code of honor which often is a mountaineer's nearest approach to the religious, but which is as binding and sacred as if based upon Holy Writ.

Joel sat erect on his log, a calloused hand gripping each knee, his gray eyes fixed on the sheriff's face.

"Did ye ever know Milt Davis who lived over in Breathitt County?" he asked.

"Naw." Clint shook his head. "I hadn't even heard of him until his name was brought up at your trial."

"Wal, I knowed him," declared Joel; "knowed him well. We was raised togither on South Fork," he continued, "and we al'ays thought a heap o' each other. Atter we growed up, he went to Breathitt and I come here to live. Oncet in a while we'd visit back and forth—and when my ole woman and young'uns died, one by one, Milt got wind o' hit and never failed to 'tend their funeral-meetin's.

"Then, two year ago, I heerd that he was a-dyin'. I went to him quick. He'd lost all his folks too, 'cept a gal, Cassy, who was eighteen. With me sittin' thar aside o' his bed and him a-breathin' his last, he says to me:

" 'Joel,' says he, 'I'm miserable in mind 'cause I got to leave Cassy with nobody to look atter her. I've done all by her that I kin; sent her to school, helped her git religion and l'arned her to be clever 'bout the house. I know that ye air a wicked man. Ye can't read or write, and ye sw'ars at Gawd instead o' by Him. But—but, Joel, I want ye to take my leetle gal and do by her whatever ye 'low is best. Will ye?'

"Hit's mighty hard to refuse a dyin' friend; so I says:

" 'Yas, Milt, I will. I'll take her back home with me and keer fer her like ye ax.'

"Milt, he reached fer my hand, sorta smiled, and in a minnet he was gone."

A softer light shone in Joel's gray eyes.

"Cassy was a purty gal," he resumed. "She didn't take on much over her pappy; jest shet herself up in a room fer a few hour and come out 'pearin' comforted. Then she packed up the few fixin's she had, clumb behind me on my mule and we started fer Cliffty Crick.

" 'Long the way I got to studyin'. I was livin' alone in my cabin with no wimmenfolks nigh and she'd have to live thar with me. O' course that wouldn't be harmful in hitself, but I knowed hit'ud cause the gal to be called out o' her virtue. So I tole her how hit was and 'lowed I ought to wed with her to make things seem right. She didn't offer much objection and we stopped at Campton and had hit done.

"Hit was part o' the trade, Clint, that she'd bear my name and that was all," Joel explained. "She was jest eighteen. I was goin' on sixty and sinful as I was, I didn't aim to be more'n a pappy to her. That was why she give in so easy, I reckon. She didn't 'spicion then how I drank licker and how mean I was with a gun. When we got to my cabin she took the loft, I slept in the big room and the neighbors didn't know the difference."

JOEL stretched his long legs and spat on the ground. The sheriff was listening intently.

"Clint, I 'low a feller never gits too ole to be plumb human. As the weeks went by and I watched Cassy workin' round the house, cookin' and cleanin' and waitin' on me, I begun to feel changed toward her. She never had much to say; fact is, she wouldn't hardly open her mouth onless I axed her a question. But she was al'ays tidy in her dress, quick to see if I wanted anything and thar was somethin' in her face that the other wimmen hereabouts didn't have.

"I come to notice that and a heap o' things, as I growed to love her, that I hadn't noticed afore. One was that she had a way o' goin' off up-stairs, several times a day and stayin' thar quiet-like by herself.

"That somehow struck me as queer. So when she went up thar ag'in, I clumb the ladder atter her to l'arn what she was a-doin'. Thar she sot on the floor, her back to me, her head bent low, a-lookin' at a picture in her hand. I couldn't make out what hit was about—but as soon as she come down to git dinner, I went up real easy and hunted fer hit amongst her fixin's.

"Hit was under the piller o' her bed that I found hit. Naw, hit wasn't a picture o' her pappy, like I hoped, but showed the face o' a heap younger feller. He was mighty handsome, too, and hit was plain that he didn't belong in these parts. More'n that, he didn't favor no man that I'd ever run across in my life.

"Wal, Clint, all at oncet I come to hate him. Hit didn't need words to tell me that Cassy loved him and the idee o' hit made me jealous-hearted."

Joel chuckled dryly, cynically.

"Jest think o' me, a ole man, bein' sech a fool! She was young, and young blood hankers fer young blood. I might 'a' knowed she'd never keer fer me like I keered fer her. And I did know hit, only I loved her so much that hit naturally crippled my reason.

"That night I went out and got drunk. I rode home a-hollerin' and a-shootin' up the houses 'long the way, doin' no tellin' how much damage. Hit was the fust time Cassy had seen me in that fix but she didn't say nothin' till mornin'.

"Then she 'lowed: 'Joel, why don't ye start now to behave yerself? Ye air gettin' on in years and ye'll have a sight to answer fer when ye die. I've heerd since I come here that ye owns up to killin' seventeen men. Don't ye know hit's wrong to kill?'

" 'Who says hit's wrong?' I axed, cussin'. 'Jest the sheriff and the jedge at Frenchburg, who ain't got nothin' to do but meddle in other folks' business. Yas, I've kilt seventeen men. I got nine a-feudin', laywayed six, and two I had to shoot to keep 'em from shootin' me.

" 'Killin' men's as easy as killin' snakes,' I says. 'Ye git used to hit mighty quick and then hit comes natural. A bullet ends all argument and stops trouble that can't be stopped in no other way. When a person riles me, I jest p'int my gun and pull the trigger. That's al'ays a shore cure.'

"She didn't sass me back but went up in the loft to that air picture, I reckon. Several time I laid off fer to ax her who the feller was and whar I could find him; but I 'lowed she wouldn't tell me. Besides when I'd look into her purty face and start to speak o' hit, I'd feel real foolish and tongue-tied. I wanted to speak to her o' other things, too, and tech her; but thar was that in her eyes, Clint, that held me off like a pair o' .45's. Even when I was drinkin', I somehow had sense enough not to harm her. I kept my oath thar.

"The week atter she talked up to me so

gentle, I met Willie Turner on the road. He's jest a boy and mighty friendly. In passin' the time he axed fer Cassy.

" 'I see her o' Sundays over at Gray's Branch,' he says. 'Joel, why don't ye go to meetin' with her?'

" 'I never was inside o' a church-house in my life,' I says, 'and I ain't got no use fer parsons. They air al'ays makin' trouble and talkin' o' things I don't know nothin' about. What's more, ye'll not ketch Cassy nigh 'em ag'in, neither.'

"I made her quit goin' to meetin', Clint, fearin' that air picture feller might be hangin' round thar. I got meaner and meaner with her. Whenever a man come to our house, I sent her inside to wait until he was gone. Yas, I was jest that jealous-hearted! Thar was a dance New Christmas on Parched Corn Crick and she begged to go, but I wouldn't let her. I watched her close, and ever' time she went outsiden the yard I follered her. Still she didn't act more 'spicious then common, except she went up to the loft of'ener and studied over that picture.

"I reckon hit was the only comfort she had. She'd al'ays 'pear brighter and happier when she come down from hit. But ever' time she done that I sot myself ag'in' a jug o' moonshine to wash away my misery."

Joel Ballard put his hand to his brow, and pressed the thumb and forefinger to his temples. When he withdrew it the sheriff saw a haunted gleam in his eyes—but he still held himself stolidly erect on the log.

"Finally, Clint," he continued, "I'd bore hit as long as I could. Hit was like a rat gnawin' inside o' me that I couldn't pacify and couldn't kill. Hatin' a man don't help unless ye kin git at him and lovin' a woman is plain torment when she don't love ye. The two togither, coupled with moonshine, is more'n anybody kin stand fer al'ays.

"Gittin' home late one night, drunk as usual, I found Cassy waitin' up. She was sittin' by the cook-stove with that picture in her hand, her lips movin' silent like she was talkin' to hit. Thar was a ax in the corner nigh her and I seen hit too. 'Peared as if somethin' broke inside my head at the sight o' hit. I staggered across the floor to her, madder'n I'd ever been afore.

" 'What's that ye got in yer hand?' I hollered. 'Who is he? Whar does he live?'

"She looked up, skeered.

" 'Hit's—hit's—' she began. 'Oh, Joel, ye wouldn't understand!'

"I reached and grabbed the picture from her.

" 'Do ye love this here feller?' I says. '—— ye, Cassy Ballard, do ye love him better'n ye do me?'

" 'Yas,' she gasped, 'I love him. He's all I got to love now. But wait. Don't tear hit up! I'll tell you who he is! Oh, don't—don't hit me—please——'

"She didn't git no farther, Clint. Them was her last words. Another minnet and me'n that ax had done the sorriest night's work these hills have ever knowed."

The old man paused again. His features twitched convulsively, then resumed their deadly calm. The sheriff, while long ago hardened to scenes and tales of violence, muttered an oath and his jaw stiffened.

"Clint, ye recollect as well as I do what happened at the trial. I proved a alibi, as ye-all call hit, and thar weren't no eye-witnesses. Hit ain't easy anyway to convict a man o' murder in these parts, ye know. I'd been up eleven times afore in my life and each time I come clear."

Sheriff Hawkins nodded grimly.

"The arm of Kaintucky law is short and mighty shaky when it reaches in among these hills," he said.

"Yas, but I soon l'arned that killin' a person ye love is different from killin' a person ye hate. When I got back to my cabin from Frenchburg, nothin' was the same. I felt like the heart had been took out o' me and I was all holler inside. Not that I was remorseful, but I missed Cassy turrable. That leetle cabin 'peared empty withouten her; my victuals didn't taste right; and I was so restless I couldn't keep still.

"Atter supper one evenin', with the moon a-shinin', I got to wanderin' and happened by the schoolhouse. Hit was lighted up and I stopped by the door. Inside, fillin' the benches, was a crowd o' men and wimmen, some of 'em older'n me. I heerd tell o' moonlight schools, but I didn't take no stock in 'em. They was new-fangled, I 'lowed, and I hated new-fangled things.

"Jest the same, seein' them ole folks a-studyin' books and listenin' to the teacher made me curious. I was lonely and I reckoned that sech doin's might help to keep me company. So I slipped in and sot down. The teacher, he was a-figgerin' on a blackboard and a-talkin'. He writ a letter and made us say hit atter him; then he writ several and tole us what they stood fer.

"WAL, Clint, I went back thar the next school-night, and the next, and the next—until, afore long, I could write my own name. Think o' hit, make a few markin's with a pencil and have 'em speak *Joel Ballard* as plain as ye kin say hit! I took to readin', too; and them printed books come to speak the same as the writin'. What things I begun to l'arn! I read that thar's a heap o' land outside o' Kaintucky and all o' hit ain't hills. I found that some towns have more folks and houses in 'em than thar air in this hull county. A hist'ry, as the teacher called hit, 'lowed that thar's been wars in this country to what a feud ain't worse'n a dawg-fight.

"Day atter day I'd work round my farm and study about Cassy, and at night I'd go to the schoolhouse. A leetle l'arnin' is like a leetle moonshine, I reckon; hit gives ye a cravin' fer more. And hit was to me the same as being woke up atter sleepin' sixty year.

"Then, one time, the teacher give me a book.

" 'Hit's fer ye to read and keep,' he says. 'Take hit home with ye, and maybe thar's somethin' in hit that'll help ye.'

"I didn't wait till mornin' to find out what hit could tell. Squattin' thar by my fire that night, I begun to turn the pages. Hit had pictures in hit, Clint, purty colored pictures, sech as I'd never seen afore. I was jest wishin' that Cassy could share hit with me, when, happenin' to lift the front kiver, I swore a oath. Thar, lookin' me straight in the eye, peaceful and sort o' smilin', was the face o' the feller she loved!"

Old Joel rose from the log. His hand fumbled into his coat pocket and drew out a book. Its binding already was worn and the pages were thumbed and soiled. He held it before the sheriff.

"I've studied hit through and through, Clint. I've l'arned all I kin about the feller Cassy loved better'n me. I don't hate him no longer. He was kilt too, 'cause somebody was jealous-hearted. He died fer her and she died fer love o' Him."

Clint Hawkins got unsteadily to his feet. He tugged at his mustache, rubbed his chin, but did not speak. Joel went on, his voice low but controlled:

"Other things I read in this book, over and over. 'Ye shalt not kill,' hit says in one place. And fer them that does, hit axes 'A eye fer a eye and a tooth fer a tooth.' Afore I seen hit here in print, I 'lowed hit was jest the law that says that. I was that unknowin' and ignorant. I reckoned I had a right to fit and kill, fer only men had tole me I oughtn't. Now I've learned that them men was jest passin' on the words o' this here book."

He slipped it back into his pocket. His eyes never wavered from the sheriff's face.

"The law has been cheated, Clint," he declared. "I murdered Cassy, and I hankers to go and stand trial whar she's at. I'm yer prisoner. Let's go down to the road and ye kin do yer duty thar."

He turned, and the sheriff stared after him until he disappeared beyond the screen of rhododendrons. Then, pulling himself together, but still confused, Clint slowly followed.

When he reached the trail he saw the old man waiting beneath the poplar, where the horse was hitched and he was knotting one end of the hempen rope about his neck.

"Hold on there!" exclaimed Clint, suddenly recovering his senses. "What do you think you're doing?"

Joel seemed not to hear the question.

"Thar ain't no use in troublin' the court to try me ag'in," he said. "That's why I sent fer ye. Hit's the sheriff who does the hangin' anyway, and atter I'd made my confession, I 'lowed ye could do hit here as well as not."

He hesitated, tightened the rope about his neck, then added:

"I put on my best clothes to die in. Hit's a foolish notion, o' course, but I want to be lookin' nice when I meet Cassy. And, Clint—Clint, I want to keep this book in my pocket too. Ye don't mind doin' me that favor, do ye?"

He stood at his full height, his shoulders squared, no hint of fear in his bearded face. The rope dangled from his neck to the ground and just above him the poplar put out a horizontal limb which he had chosen for his place of execution.

Clint looked at him wonderingly.

"Why, old feller, I can't hang you!" he ejaculated. "It would be plain murder.

The laws of this State say that no man's life shall be put in jeopardy twice for the same offense. When the court cleared you of killing your wife, that ended it. I can't arrest you again for what the law's already acted on."

Joel suddenly paled.

"Can't arrest me?" he repeated dully. "Can't hang me atter I've tole ye I kilt her? Clint, that ain't right! I ought to hang—I got to hang—I *want* to hang!"

Sheriff Hawkins shook his head.

"It don't make no difference, Joel. Your confession come too late. What's done can't be undone now. Cassy's dead, you're free—and if I did what you ask, I'd be a murderer myself."

"And I've got to live with this a-preyin' on me?" The old man's voice rose to a quavering cry. "I've got to go back to my cabin and feel her thar all about me and see her in my sleep and hear her a-pleadin' fer mercy when I tromp them empty rooms?"

The sheriff compressed his lips and nodded.

"Yes, that's what it means," he said after a moment. "Where the law of man stops, another law begins; and where our courts fail, another court hands down jedgment. You've got your sentence, Joel," he added, "and you have to serve your time."

The old man mumbled thickly—

"Serve my time—ten year, twenty year—all alone—in that cabin whar she was—whar I kilt her—night and day, day and night, month atter month—nothin' to do but wait and wait and wait, ten year, twenty year—studyin' 'bout her—all alone——"

He raised his eyes to the sheriff, and their stoicism had melted to dazed hopelessness. Yet he did not forget.

"I'm obleeged to ye, Clint, fer comin' so fur and trustin' me. Yas, I'm pow'ful obleeged to ye," he said.

Sheriff Hawkins silently watched him turn away. His shoulders sagged; his chin dropped to his breast; his arms hung limply. The rope was still knotted about his neck and the loosened coil twisted among the weeds and ruts behind him as he staggered down the trail.

THE "SA-SIS-E-TAS"

by Frank H. Huston

THE Cheyenne—Shi-en-na or Shi-e-la, less known by their own designation Dzitsi Stas, pronounced Sa-sis-e-tas—were without exception the most warlike and military of any of the American Indians.

While perhaps not as accomplished horse-stealers as the Pawnees, Comanches, Crows and some others, their fighting qualities and ability are unquestionable.

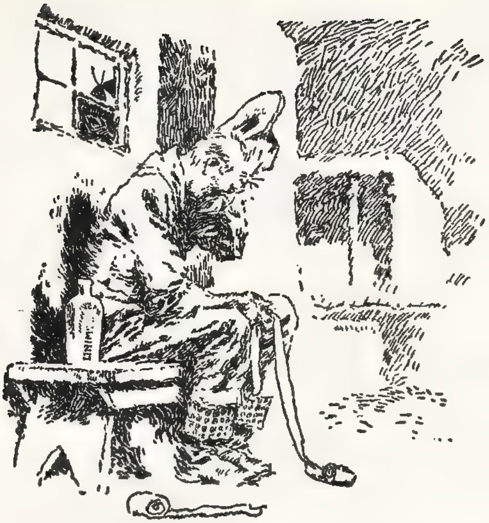
The tribal sign, made by drawing the right index finger across the left forefinger or wrist, is commonly interpreted "cut wrists" or "cut fingers." It is said to be derived from their custom of cutting off the fingers and hands of slain enemies.

Although the same practise was found among other tribes the Cheyenne were particularly distinguished in this regard.

In Mackenzie's great fight with the Cheyenne in Wyoming in 1876 two necklaces made of human fingers were found in the captured Indian camp, together with a small bag filled with hands cut from the bodies of children of the Shoshone tribe, their enemies. One of these necklaces was afterward deposited in the National Museum at Washington, D. C. Some competent authorities, Indian and whites, say however that the sign is intended to indicate "stripe people" or "striped arrow people," referring to the fact that the Shienna usually feathered their arrows with the striped feathers of the wild turkey.

This agrees with the interpretation of the name for the Cheyenne in several different languages.

Some observers included the Blackfeet band of Sioux—not to be confounded with the Blackfeet tribe (Piegans)—known as the Si-ha-sa-pa among the Cheyenne gens. This classification was based on a similarity in habits and habitat (along the Cheyenne River), but the classification is incorrect as the Si-ha-sa-pa spoke the language of the "Aceti Sakowin," the "Seven Council Fires" people, as the Sioux termed themselves.



Between PIKE'S PEAK and A PICKLE

by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Hashknife, Philanthropist," "Evidently Not," etc.

ACCORDING to the knowledge I've absorbed in this vale of sorrow and tears, there's one word in our language that is apt to make a liar out of any of us. She's a word that's used kinda careless-like, without us stopping to consider what she means.

The dictionary orates that she's: "Any object, state, event, act or fact whatever; thing of any kind; something or other; in any measure; anywise; at all."

She's a word that hadn't ought to be used except by folks who are plumb willing to haul in their horns and admit they're wrong. She's a blood-brother to the word, "Everything," which also covers a lot of territory. Tell yuh why I know that "Anything" is a hard word to handle.

"I can ride anything that has hoofs," proclaims "Yuma" Yates.

We stands there at Buck's bar and nods just like Yuma knowed we'd nod, 'cause Yuma has just got enough hooch under his belt to act peevish if somebody disagrees with him; and none of us wants Yuma's demise on our soul.

"I can ride anythin' that wears ha'r," says Yuma, after another drink percolates through his nervous system.

"Y'betcha," grunts "Dirty Shirt" Jones. "Yuma's some rider."

"He can ride," nods "Magpie" Simpkins. "He can do all that."

"I can ride anythin' that has a head, tail and legs," expands Yuma.

"The same of which is a multitude to accomplish," says Pete Gonyer. "Once I knowed——"

"You ain't disagreein' with me, is yuh?" asks Yuma.

"Not complete and definite," replies Pete. "Yuh see, Yuma, I knowed——"

"I can ride anythin'," declares Yuma, "I don't give a —— what she is or may have been. *Sabe?* I'm the champion rider of the world and other places too numerous to mention and I hereby declares open and unanimous—I can ride anythin'.

"I don't care what she consists of, gents. I've got five hundred dollars that says I can ride anythin' yuh can mention. I'll cinch my hull to a June-bug or a jumbo-elephant and I'll ride 'em till the cows come home. I am the——"

"Five hundred dollars is a heap of dinero to wager on the stren'th of scratchin' a animile," opines "Mighty" Jones. "Pers'nally I figger that there's too much odds in conjunction with them kinda feats, and I——"

"You-all deserious of wagerin' said amount?" asks Yuma, belligerent-like. "'Cause if yuh are, Mighty, I hereby opens my roll——"

"Your proclamation covers your ability to ride anythin'?" says Magpie, smoothin' his mustache.

"Anythin'," nods Yuma. "Anythin' yuh sees fit to bring to my notice. Of course she has to be somethin' visible and also active, whether animate or inanimate. I rides upright and handsome on anythin', gents. Anythin'."

"Your statement appears like this to me," said Judge Steele, peering over his glasses at Yuma. "You states without reservations to wit: that you, Yuma Yates, bein' of sound mind, etcettery, also bein' the party of the first part, does hereby covenant and specify that you, bein' the party of the first part, do openly appear before us this day and date and proclaim audibly in the presence of reliable witnesses that you lays yourself liable to wager the sum of five hundred dollars of coin of the realm upon your ability to ride anythin'.

"The said word 'anythin'' covers things of any description, whether animate or inanimate, fundamentally organic or inorganic and barring no sex, breed, occupation nor ferocity. That party of the first part agrees and does despose that the said word, 'anythin'' covers just what she means, without reservations, renegin' nor rinnacaboo of any kind. Given under my hand and seal this——"

"My ——!" gasps Yuma. "A eddication is a wonderful thing, judge. I don't *sabe* all that *wau-wau*, but I do *sabe* the word 'anythin',' and I nods my head when yuh mentions same. I ain't no four-flusher, and when I says 'anythin'' I means anythin' from Pike's Peak to a pickle, the same of which includes everything yuh can think of to mention between them same two articles.

"Does anybody speak up? Piperock town lost all its bettin' blood? Ain't there anybody around here what has nerve enough to challenge my statements, or is my reputation overpowerin' your sensibilities?

"I'm the best rider in the world! I'm a he-wolf by nature and a glue-pot by ability. I've got five hundred dollars that says——"

"I takes that measly little wager," states Magpie, easy-like. "It ain't much money, the same of which is true, but I can use it to jingle, I reckon."

"You do?" Yuma fusses with his mustache and glares at Magpie like he was astonished a lot.

"You bettin' ag'in' my five hundred dollars, Mister Simpkins?"

"Yeah," nods Magpie. "I'll take your little bet, Yuma. Judge, will you make out the papers for this deal? Hates to trouble yuh over a small matter but I wants it all in legal order."

"Huh!" grunts Yuma. "Whatcha goin' to lead out fer me to straddle, Magpie?"

"Somethin'," grins Magpie. "Somethin' between Pike's Peak and a pickle."

"When is said ride to be accomplished, Magpie?" asks the judge.

"Make it tomorrow, judge. I reckon I can round up the steed by that time."

"Is there any chance to get in on this bet?" asks Mighty Jones.

"Who yuh want to bet upon?" asks Buck Masterson.

"I've seen Yuma ride," says Mighty, "and I might trail my bet with his."

"I know Magpie," opines Dirty Shirt. "I sure do *sabe* that jasper a-plenty and when he bets five hundred dollars, I trails with him and plays a cinch. I'm willin' to dee-po-sit a hundred dollars on his judgment."

"I takes the bet," says Mighty.

"Tomorrow afternoon at two P.M.," says the judge. "Right in the main street of this here town of Piperock. I'll have the papers all drawed up."

"Where do yuh aim to get the buckin' bronc, Magpie?" asks Yuma.

"Bronc ——!" grunts Magpie. "Who said anythin' about a bronc, Yuma? You has covered a lot of territory in your remarks."

"Nobody can ride Pike's Peak nor a pickle," says Mighty.

"There's a danged lot of things between them two," grins Magpie. "A danged lot of things, Mighty."

"I—I sure can ride," says Yuma.

"You'll sure as —— have to," grins Magpie.

ME AND Dirty Shirt goes back to the cabin with Magpie, and when we gets inside I opens my mouth for the first time and I speaks like this:

"Yuma Yates is the best danged rider in the State, Magpie. He can stick a lot closer to a horse than the hide of the same animal and what's more and a lot of interest to me—you ain't got no five hundred dollars."

"He's a good rider," nods Magpie. "As far as broncs are concerned there ain't nobody what can equal him, Ike. There's other buckers besides horses, ain't there? Yuma talked too much. I ain't got no five hundred dollars Ike, but me and you together can rake up that much."

"I've got four hundred and thirty-six in the bank," says I," and she's goin'——"

"And I've got eighty, which leaves us a balance of fifty-six."

"I'm dependin' on Magpie's judgment a hundred dollars' worth," says Dirty.

"Supposin' he rides it?" says I. "I lose real money."

"Yeah, mebbe he will, Ike. There ain't nothin' impossible in this world, but I'm willin' to bet——"

"All my money."

"Shows how much faith I've got in it."

"Be cheerful," advises Dirty Shirt. "Either Magpie has something up his sleeve or he's gone plumb loco."

"He ain't got nothing up his sleeve except his arm and as far as going loco—he's been away for a long time."

"If you're scared of losin' a few cents lend me the money."

"Lend you four hundred and twenty dollars, Magpie? Nope, I'd rather take a chance on a bad bet. Yuma Yates can ride anything——"

"No, he can't!" yelps Magpie. "Not right off the reel. Mabbe he could ride anything if he had a chance to practise. Yuh got to figure that Yuma has been toppin' bad broncs ever since he started to wear pants and she's natural to suppose that he's got dexterious in said pastime, but I ain't got no bronc in mind. As long as he makes his war-talk about horses, I keeps still, but when he spreads out and takes in anything—anything, mind yuh—well, I calls him."

"And imperils my bank-roll. How does we split if we win?"

"Fifty-fifty. Now, Ike, I know you bears the burden of the bet, but yuh has to remember that I'm the lizard that finds the unridable steed. Me and you are goin' out and have a little talk with 'Cut Bank' Cooley."

"What has that absent-minded coot got to do with it?"

"Considerable. You better get that extra fifty-six dollars."

"I hear that Cut Bank sold a herd of sheep," says Dirty.

"He did," nods Magpie. "Then he got his skin full of hooch and made some purchases, one of which I has seen in action. I wasn't takin' no chances when I called Yuma Yates' bluff."

If there ever was a human being with a reverse-English brain, that one is Cut Bank Cooley. His past is plumb fogged, and his future is indefinite. In the morning he can't seem to remember going to bed, and if you asks him real quick he don't remember getting up.

Cut Bank lives about six miles from Piperock, and when me and Magpie rides up to his cabin that evening we finds him setting on his front porch. He's got a bottle of liniment and some bandages in his hands, and seems to be thinking real hard. He looks up at us and says:

"Ain't it ——? I hurt myself a while ago and I got the liniment and the bandages and now I can't remember where I'm hurt."

"You been tryin' it again?" asks Magpie.

"Now I know where I got hurt," he grins happy-like. "I've got a sprained ankle. I tried to ride it with spurs on and one of 'em got caught. I hope the wrist won't bother me none. What did yuh come lookin' for, Magpie?"

"Want to borrow it, Cut Bank."

"My wrist?"

"No—the whatchacallit."

"Oh, the—uh—thing?"

"Uh-huh. Know Yuma Yates?"

"Think I do."

"Says he can ride anythin' on earth."

"He can't," declares Cut Bank. "I'm a good rider, but I ain't got a chance with this thing. Yesterday—no, not yesterday, or was it? No, I think it was today. Anyway, the date don't make a —— bit of difference. The cursed thing dragged me fifty feet. Honest, it's a killer, Magpie. Howl? Gosh, it threw me down and done a war-dance on my carcass. I'm gettin' so I shy at a shadder."

"What did yuh buy it for?" asks Magpie.

"For? I dunno. What did I buy a baby-carriage for? What did I buy a barber-chair for? I reckon I knowed at the time but I forgot to write down my reasons."

"Where is the thing?" asks Magpie.

"The thing? Oh, yeah—down in the corral. I've got her roped to the fence and got the gate blocked. I'm all through. *Sabe?* It must 'a' cost me a lot of money, but I'll sell cheap—say, about ten dollars—and give away a can of fodder for the danged thing. It's either sell or die, I reckon, and I don't want to die, do I?"

"Is it in good shape?" asks Magpie.

"Good shape?"

Cut Bank squints at us and licks his lips.

"Good shape ——! That thing's in prime condition."

"Will yuh show us how to start it?"

"Sure. That part is a cinch; yuh know it? Anybody can start it, Magpie, but it sure takes—Ike, you hold the gate, will yuh? I ain't goin' to start it, yuh understand, but yuh never can tell about it; so if she should start—hold the gate."

Cut Bank is so crippled that he has to cut a circle going to the corral, where we climbs the fence and looks down on the thing. It looks a heap like a bicycle, only it's a lot bigger and heavier and has a lot of machinery fastened to its frame.

"She's kinda like a automobile's offspring," says I.

"Nothin' short of the devil ever sired that thing," states Cut Bank.

MAGPIE and Cut Bank climbs to it and Cut Bank explains the principles of the thing while I sets there on the fence and throws kisses at my four hundred and twenty dollars. I figures that Yuma will have a cinch riding that thing. After while Magpie and Cut Bank rolls the thing outside.

"I'll let yuh take my horse and cart to haul it home with," offers Cut Bank, and we accepts his offer.

It's dark when we got to our cabin, and nobody got a look at the thing. I argues with Magpie that Yuma will have a cinch, but Magpie can't see it thataway.

"Cut Bank can ride," states Magpie. "Yessir, he can ride quite a few, but I seen this thing throw him fifty feet."

"Maybe he forgot to hang on."

"Yeah? Well, when this starts buckin' any man is apt to get absent-minded, Ike. Them tires is full of wind and the street is full of bumps. Figure it out for yourself."

Seems like bad news travels fast, and it don't take Yaller Rock County long to find out that there's a chance to make a little bet. Piperock seems to be backing Magpie's judgment, while Paradise and Curlew favors Yuma Yates.

"'Cause why does I take this attitude?" asks "Hassayampa" Harris, from Curlew. "'Cause I know Yuma can do it."

"Thinkin' otherwise, I bets yuh twenty dollars even money," says "Ricky" Henderson.

"Yuma can ride anythin', y'betcha," states Mike Pelly, from Paradise.

"I'm positive about eight dollars and six-bits that he can't," declares "Doughgod" Smith, and another bet is chalked up.

Yuma comes to me and gets confidential.

"Ike, did Magpie pick a wild one fer me?"

"Naw," says I. "Plumb tame, Yuma. Won't kick, strike, bite nor hump its back. Fact is, it ain't frisky a-tall."

"Whatcha mean, Ike? Has it ever been rode?"

"I dunno."

"Branded?"

"Didn't see none."

"Shucks! What color?"

"Red."

Yuma nods like he knew all about it, and then went back to the bar, where he recites some more of his hard rides.

Magpie listens to Yuma bragging for a while and then he says—

"Ain't never had to hang on, has yuh, Yuma?"

"Y'betcha I never did. Never found one that I had to."

"This one is that kind but I'll concede that much to yuh. Hang on all yuh want to, Yuma."

"Mean that I can pull leather if I feel like it?"

"With both hands."

"Wish I had a million to bet," groans Yuma. "That's the worst of bein' poor. I could ride a cyclone if I pulled leather."

"Does he lose if his cinch busts?" asks Hassayampa.

"Well," says Magpie, "there wasn't anything said about cinches but if he can put a cinch on this steed we'll let him have two tries in case his cinch busts."

"Anythin' between Pup-Pike's Pup-Peak and a pup-pickle," says Dirty Shirt, who is organized internally. "Th' pup-poor fuf-freak!"

"Don'tcha call me no freak!" snaps Yuma, mean-like, fooling with the butt of his gun.

"Thasso?" grins Dirty Shirt, looking cock-eyed at Yuma. "Go on and brag about ridin' and let loose of that gun."

Yuma done just that. Yuma can ride better than Dirty, but when it comes to shooting fast Dirty not only shades him but he plumb shadows Yuma entirely.

The trouble with Piperock is this; she can't do much betting without getting kinda sore and in this respect Curlew and Paradise runs us a dead heat. Before sunrise the next morning there's more hard feelings than dogs in our town and that's more than a bookkeeper could count in a week. Paradise and Curlew hates Piperock and mistrusts each other.

Poor old Yuma Yates is a bull's-eye and don't know it, 'cause he's got to a point where nothing short of a violet mastodon would attract his attention. I finds him behind Buck's place talking to a loose wagon-wheel. He's got the wheel in both hands and is trying to bawl it out for standing on his feet.

I went over to remonstrate with him for chiding a poor inanimate object and I got one foot through the spokes. I don't blame Yuma for talking to it. There's something uncanny about a wagon-wheel—a loose one. It ain't got no visible means of support but just the same it sure can take care of itself.

If I'm ever elected sheriff I'm going to carry a wagon-wheel instead of handcuffs. Did yuh ever see a fly get hoodled into a spider's web? That's how me and Yuma mingled with that wagon-wheel.

Dirty Shirt comes along and helps us get loose from it and we left him with both feet and his head in the darned thing. Then we meets Magpie, and he's happy all over his face.

"This here is goin' to be a gala day," says he. "Plumb gala, yuh know it?"

"Whyfor gala, Magpie?"

"*Fiesta*, like a Mexican, Ike. Paradise is goin' to bring their band."

"That's goin' to be fine," says Yuma. "I rides good to music. Where does I fork this animile, Magpie?"

"Right in the main street, Yuma. We're goin' to form a holler square, as yuh might say, by roping off both ends of the street. Paradise and Curlew is goin' to come in force and I reckon she'll be gala and also festive. Yuma, you better sober up. I don't want to win money from no inebriate."

"Drunk or sober, I can ride anythin'," declares Yuma, positive-like. "I'm plumb sentimental about my ability."

Yuma leans against a post and sobs over his wonderful ability. There ain't no use of me tryin' to comfort him, so I goes back to liberate Dirty Shirt. I finds him setting on the wheel talking to Mighty Jones and they're talking big money.

"I want to bet him a million dollars," states Dirty. "I'm a sport, I am."

"I ain't got no million—not with me," says Mighty. "I've got somethin' less than three dollars."

"Ain't yuh got nothin' to bet?" asks Dirty, and Mighty shakes his head.

"No. I ain't got nothin' but my honor left."

"I'll bet a nickel against that," declares Dirty Shirt, "and that's givin' yuh big odds."

"How much is coyote bounties now, Ike?" asks Mighty.

"Three dollars. Hides worth four-bits per each."

"I've got seven," says Mighty. "I been raisin' 'em up a heap, thinkin' maybe I'd sell 'em to a mu-see-um. Seven times three dollars and four-bits is twenty-four dollars and four-bits."

"I'll bet against your coyotes, Mighty," states Dirty Shirt.

"That's a —— of a thing to bet," says I.

"Ain't no worse than 'Swede' Johnson bettin' seven dollars against 'Bantie' Weyman's grizzly bear, is it?" asks Dirty. "Ain't no bounty on a grizzly bear."

THEN me and Dirty went down to my cabin, where we finds Magpie fussing with the machine. Dirty looks it over, awed-like, and then climbs up on the end post of the bunk. Magpie unscrews a little cap and pours in a lot of stuff from the fodder-can.

"Know how to make her go?" asks Dirty.

"Sure," grins Magpie. "Lemme show yuh how she starts."

He sets on her, steps hard on one of them foot-rests and then—took a recess.

Comes a yelp and a howl, a bombardment from a battleship and I got knocked under the bunk with part of the cook-stove in my lap and the pantry on my head. When I got out and looked around I can't see Dirty Shirt, nor Magpie. The go-devil is in the middle of the floor, the stove is upside down and our one window ain't got neither frame nor pane left.

Just then the door opens and Magpie comes inside. He's got a red streak down his nose and one eye is shaded a heap. He looks around the cabin and then at the machine. He starts to pick it up, when we hears Dirty Shirt's voice saying—

"Let it alone!" and he comes up from under the other bunk, with a gun in his hand and a scared look on his face.

"Don't do that again, Magpie," he wails.

"I'm willin' to admit that you knows how to start it. My ——! How awful is them there de-vices of menkind. I'm goin' to pawn my home and future to bet on that rattletybang. Yuma Yates can just write his own epitaph and give us his hat to bury, 'cause we'll never find his remains."

"Didja see it sunfish?" asks Magpie, feeling of his nose. "That thing comes as near bein' 'anything' as we could find."

"May Yuma rest in peace," says Dirty, solemn-like.

"He might—if he ever comes down," grins Magpie.

We sets there on the steps of our cabin and watches Paradise, Curlew and the surrounding country come hither to see the fun. Yaller Rock County folks don't have much entertainment and you can shift the whole population to one central point by just announcing a dog-fight.

Me and Dirty wanders down to the main street after while to see what's going on. Paradise brings her band, which is composed of Mike Pelly, "Slim" Hawkins, "Cactus" Collins, "Dog-Rib" Davidson, "Baldy" Blewett, and "Sad" Samuels.

Sad belongs in Curlew but they ain't got no band up there, and a fellow who is musical like Sad is can't help getting into a band. He beats the big drum. They've got the main street roped off for a space of about a hundred yards. On the sidewalk in front of Buck's place is a big pole-cage and inside of it is a grizzly bear, the same of which is Bantie Weyman's seven-dollar bet. Over on "Wick" Smith's porch is another box with seven full-grown coyotes inside.

"All we need is a wild man," says "Jay Bird" Whittaker. "If we had one we'd have a reg'lar circus."

"You will have pretty soon," grins Dirty. "Watch Yuma Yates."

Then cometh Mike Pelly and pours out his troubles.

"I've got a band," says Mike, proud-like, "and I ain't got no place to set 'em."

"Does they have to get set?" I asks.

"Down," says he. "Them music utensils cost a heap of money and we can't take no chances on havin' a bucker come along and bend, dent or damage 'em. 'Pears like we'll have to dispense with the seri-nade."

"Why don't said band set on horses?" asks Judge Steele. "I've heard tell of mounted bands. If they're on horses they'll be plumb safe."

"Daw-gone!" grunts Mike. "Never thought of it. Sure we can play thataway. Why not? Much obliged, judge."

"You're welcome, Mike."

Me and Dirty went over and watched the band get lined up on their horses.

"Ain't yuh goin' to play pretty soon?" asks Dirty.

"I dunno," says Sad. "Ask Mike—he's the leader."

"Not 'till Yuma starts to ride," says Mike. "We only know one piece and there ain't no use showin' that one off till we has to."

"What's the nature of it?" asks Mighty Jones.

"'Liver and Lights,'" says Dog-Rib Davidson.

"Aw-w-w ——!" grunts Baldy Blewett. "It ain't that a-tall, Dog-Rib. It's 'Hearts and Flowers.'"

"Yeah," nods Dog-Rib, "that's it. I knowed it was somethin' about a man's insides, but I plumb overlooked the bokay end of the thing."

"How long has yuh been operatin' on this piece of music?" asks Dirty.

"Once," says Mike. "Of course we has practised separately but only once has we been assembled. We sure got her down to a two-step."

"Who showed yuh how to read music?" asks Mighty. "Sad Samuels can't even read plain writin'."

"I can if I need to!" snaps Sad. "Anyway, yuh don't have to read to hammer a drum. All yuh has to do is to keep with the rest of the music."

"You've got a chore, Sad," nods Mighty, looking at the rest of the band. "If the sheriffs of about three counties show up you'll sure have some chore."

"Feller citizens and otherwise," orates a voice, and we deserts the band to listen to Judge Steele, who has climbed up on the bear-cage and is standing there with one hand inside his vest and the other on his hip.

"Feller citizens, et cettery," continues the judge. "We has been called together this afternoon to gaze with awe and admiration upon the ability of our feller citizen and compatriot, Benjamin Alexander Claypoole Yates, otherwise knowed as Yuma Yates, who is a rider of parts. He is knowed far and wide as the best rider in the country. In honor of this festive occasion we have with us the Paradise Silver Cornet Band, a aggregation which is doomed to rival Caruso, Sary Bernhardt, et cettery, led by Mike Pelly, who plays the bugle.

"There has been many wagers among us and I asks yuh in the name of Jehovah and the Congressional Record to set on your gun-hand until the issue at stake is settled. Let us not drag our fair names in the mire of discord.

"Citizen Simpkins has seen to take umbrage at the statements of Yuma Yates and has placed bets of five hundred dollars that said Yuma Yates can't ride all and sundry things. Others has thought so or otherwise, until I has been overwhelmed with the responsibility of handling much money.

"Gents and feller citizens, I has heard that some are not satisfied with me as stakeholder. There is some so impure in mind and soul that they mistrusts a lawyer. To me this is *non compos mentis*. I has done my duty as I seen it, but I hereby states that I will not be responsible further. I asks you betters to appoint a reliable man to hold the stakes, the same of which must be done at once. Amen."

"I seconds the motion," yells "Big Foot" Forrest, "and I hereby nominates Ike Harper for the position of trust."

"Moved and seconded," says the judge. "Does I hear any questions?"

"I asks one," squeaks Bantie Weyman. "I've got a val'able bear in that cage and I asks that Ike be empowered to set on the cage while this buckin' contest is in duration."

"Hol' on!" yelps Mighty Jones. "I've got seven coyotes in that box over there, the same of which is worth more than one measly bear, and I asks that Ike Harper protects my end of the bet."

" 'Pears to be a task for one man," nods the judge. "Suppose we appoints two men to handle the bets? I nominates Dirty Shirt Jones."

"I won't have it!" howls Dirty Shirt. "I ain't goin' to be no animile-keeper."

"If everybody is satisfied we'll proceed," says the judge and then he hands me a valise. It don't seem to have anything in it and I immediate and soon tells him about it.

"There ain't no money in it, Ike. The legal papers, et cettery, are there. *Sabe?*"

"It's ——, but directions says take it," mourns Dirty Shirt. "Which hunk of natcheral hist'ry does you favor, Ike?"

"I'm a heap neutral between grizzlies and coyotes. Take your pick, Dirty."

"I'll accept the grizzly, Ike. If the worst comes to the worst I wants to have a fittin' finish to a pleasant afternoon."

I WENT over and climbed up on the coyote-box. It sure is a reserved seat, being as I've got a good view of everything. Down the street comes Magpie Simpkins, herding that suicide bicycle and the crowd goes out to meet him. She's sure something new to Piperock, et cettery, and everybody wonders deep-like what she can be. They wheels her into the roped square, and Yaller Rock County talks all to once. Then Yuma Yates comes out of Buck's place, ragging his saddle. He looks at the thing and then goes back for another drink.

"She's a bicycle," states Hassayampa. "Nothin' but a bicycle."

"Yeah," admits Jay Bird, "she resembles one a heap, but there's somethin' about it that makes me kinda figure that this thing has a mission in life, besides to run on two wheels."

Yuma Yates comes back, wiping his mouth, and examines the thing.

"I dunno how to invigorate it," he complains. "I ain't no stationary rider."

"Feller," grins Magpie, "you get aboard, set yourself and say when. That's all yuh has to do. *Sabe?*"

Yuma gets on to the saddle and takes hold of the handles.

"I want about seven strong men to hold her," states Magpie, and everybody wants the honor.

"How long does Yuma have to stay with it?" asks Hassayampa.

"Gotta be a time-limit, ain't there?"

"Time ain't goin' to mean nothin' to Yuma," says Magpie, "but I'll give him three minutes."

"I could ride a boy-constrictor bareback for three minutes," states Yuma. "Cut your wolf loose any time, Mister Simpkins."

"Everybody hang on," cautions Magpie.

I hear Mike Pelly say:

"Band get ready. The minute Yuma starts, we play."

I couldn't see all the action, but I did see Magpie step down hard on that dingus on the side. Comes a howl, a cloud of dust and smoke, the rattle of a battle, an upheaval of humanity, the blare of a cornet, like the wail of a doomed soul, and out of the turmoil comes Yuma Yates.

And the band came also.

Music may have a lot of soothing effect on a savage beast, but a half-broke range bronc don't appreciate "Hearts and Flowers," especially when they hear it for the first time and also have it tooted right into their ears.

Yuma came straight for the band and the band met him half-way—six enthusiastic musicians, clawing for their saddle-horns. Hearts busted and Flowers was trampled in the dust of Piperock town.

Yuma is some rider. I'll give him a heap of credit for his ability. He went right under Cactus Collins' gray and never touched a hair. I seen a big brass horn sail through the air, like the loop of a lariat, and I tried to dodge but it hooked me right around the neck. I seen this and then Yuma Yates is upon me.

His two-wheeled devil-wagon bounced over the edge of the sidewalk and hit the coyote-crate dead center. Twenty-four dollars and four-bits' worth of coyotes went high, wide and handsome and I lit in the middle of the street on my hands and knees and the valise which contained all the bets went—somewhere.

I got to my feet in time to let a coyote go between my legs, but before I can fall, a bucking bronc come along and knocks me about twenty feet, and hit the ground just in time for Yuma to ride the full length of my carcass. I dimly hears a howl and a crash, and above the yelping and yowling comes Mighty Jones' voice, screeching:

"Head him off! Head him off!"

Zowie!

Yuma goes past me again, and if he ain't goin' a mile a minute I'll eat the barrel off my old gun. That cow-punching fool and his two-wheeled gatling gun is just a blur—a banging, screaming blur. The street is full of bucking horses, yelping coyotes, and every dog within a distance of ten miles seems to have entered our midst.

"Kill him! Kill him!" howls Dirty Shirt, doing a war-dance on the bear-cage. "Rope him—kill him before——"

Crash!

I seen Dirty Shirt turn plumb over in the air, along with a lot of small poles, and out into the street comes that grizzly bear, telling everybody how danged scared he is. Believe me, a grizzly bear can lift his voice in lamentations and this one sure runs the scale.

I seen Dog-Rib's bronc buck into Buck's front door, the same of which knocks Dog-Rib back into the street.

"Go straight, you —— fool!" howls Hassayampa and just then Yuma doubles in his tracks and knocks Hassayampa plumb over the top of the hay-scales. Yuma is with that machine, but only on it once in a while. He hangs to them handles and the go-devil does the rest. Somehow he seems to have bent the front wheel so she won't go straight, but that don't hinder him from doing that dizzy circle.

I takes a kick at that grizzly bear but any little feeble effect like the boot of a human being don't affect that animal. Them dogs has got the coyotes to running circles and then the bear joins the procession, with Yuma lapping 'em about twice while they're going forty feet.

"Stop the bear! Stop the bear!" I hears Mighty Jones yelping.

And just then comes the swish of a lariat into the parade. It was a good throw. It snagged the grizzly around the neck and over one shoulder. It was a good rope, too, but cinches are sometimes weak. I seen Mighty Jones, saddle and all, yanked off a scared-to-death cayuse and he sailed far out into the whirlpool.

Zowie!

Yuma Yates went into that rope like a cyclone and before I can duck out of the way I'm tangled with bear, rope, go-devil, Mighty and Yuma.

I landed on the bear, with a loop of rope around one of my legs, and I got both hands hooked into the rope around its neck. All this was done inside of a second or two, and then comes the shock, when Yuma took up the slack. Me and the bear turned a flip-flop and I went plumb inside Buck's place and burnt the seat of my pants on the floor before I hooked one leg around the table and stopped.

"*Ar-r-r-roo-o-o-o!*" bawls the bear and inside it comes, dragging Mighty Jones, whose feet are caught in the stirrups. The bear climbs up on the bar, crying like a whipped pup. I sees a couple of punchers fall backwards into the doorway, and then through the window comes Yuma Yates.

He turns plumb over, ricochets off a card-table and lands in behind the old pool-table, flat on his back, with both feet up the wall. Glass and busted window-frame spills all over everything. The crowd, them what is still able, comes inside. Behind the bar, kinda wedged in, is Dog-Rib's bronc; on the bar is the grizzly and under the stove is two coyotes, trying to dig a hole in the floor.

"My ——!" gasps Magpie. "This is awful!"

Buck Masterson looks like he had wintered badly, but he still knows who owns the place. He staggers up to the bar and points at the bear.

"Git down," says he, croaking-like. "Git down before I——"

Mighty gets to his feet and staggers loose from the stirrups.

"Don't yuh strike my bear," he whispers. "Tha's my bear, y'betcha. Nice little bearie."

"Look out! Whoa!" yelps somebody. "Stop it!"

I'm only a few feet from the bar, but somehow I ain't got the ambition to look out nor stop anything, and when that fool bronc switched ends in there and upset the bar I didn't have energy to do anything except set there and watch bar and bear fall right on top of me, but I did have sense enough to grab a handy rope and that bear yanked me out from under the bar, leaving both of my boots beneath.

I SEEN Magpie fall backwards out of the window and then me and the bear knocked Buck's feet from under him and all three of us went under the old pool-table. For a moment there ain't a sound and then we hears Yuma Yates' voice saying—

"*Whoa*, bronc, *whoa*, bronc!"

I gets a glimpse of his weaving legs as he sneaks up on Dog-Rib's bronc, which is all tangled up in some chairs. Yuma puts one foot in the stirrup and I see the other leg swing up.

"*Yee-e-e-e-ow-w-w!*" yelps Yuma.

I don't know what kind of bucking that bronc intended to do, but I do know that the bear got a idea of taking a look around and it drags me and Buck out into the open right in the path of the bronc and the danged bronc sunfished into the bear, turned plumb over and Yuma's head and shoulders hit into the framed picture of Napoleon at Waterloo. I got a glimpse of that fool bronc taking two door-casings from Buck's back door, and just then Yuma bounces off the wall and falls flat on the back of that grizzly bear.

I don't reckon that grizzly had the kindest disposition on earth to begin with and she's a cinch that nothing has happened to arouse its desire for loving thoughts. Yuma's eyes are shut tight and his thoughts are in the sere and yaller leaf, but he still retains his riding instinct. He hooks one leg over that grizzly's shoulder and sinks his spur on to its ribs.

I ain't here to state that a grizzly can buck harder than a horse. It ain't right to come out open-like and say that grizzly bears know the science of high and lofty bucking, but I'll say right here and now that I never seen no animal change ends as quick as that grizzly did. Yuma never had a chance.

He just seemed to sort of glide into the air over that grizzly's head, turns over graceful-like, but before he hits the ground that bear just reaches out and caresses Yuma where his pants are tight, and I'm betting yuh could hear that caress plumb over in the next State.

Then Mr. Grizzly went galloping down that wrecked saloon, dragging me and Buck in that rope, with both of us yelping for help and grasping for something to anchor. Nobody knows how far we'd 'a' went if the bear had picked the door as an exit, but it seemed to favor the window, which wasn't big enough for me and Buck to go out of together sideways. The bear made it fine, but me and Buck jammed like a pair of saw-logs. There was the bear, rearing up in the street, clawing at the rope and exerting about seven thousand pounds to the inch on the rope, while we waits for our nervous systems to collapse or for the saloon to start away from its resting-place.

"Leggo my bear," croaks Mighty's voice. "Leggo my bearie."

"Leggo——!" chokes Buck. "Git a ax and widen this winder."

"Sic 'em pups!" yelps a voice across the street, and that million dogs that I reckon had been chasing the coyotes comes across the street in a milling heap and tackles Mighty's bear. I got a glimpse of the bear coming back and I turns my head and shuts my teeth; and as I turns my head I sees Yuma coming down the center of the saloon, hanging on to his hip pockets and staring straight ahead. Then comes the shock, as the bear got to the end of the rope, but the rope broke and me and Buck collapsed, but not before I seen that bear root in between Yuma's legs and then I went to sleep. I don't know how long I slept, but I dreamed I was working in a boiler-factory. I could hear men hammering and sawing metal, and then I woke up. I hears Mike Pelly say—

"It won't be worth a —— any more."

"Gotta get it off, ain't we?" asks Magpie, peevish-like.

"I won't let nobody bury him with a French horn around his neck."

Then I sat up and looked around. What is left of Piperock, Paradise and Curlew are propped up in different attitudes around the saloon, while Magpie and Dirty Shirt are on their knees beside me, trying to file that danged band instrument from around my neck.

"You ain't dead?" asks Dirty Shirt. "Honest, ain't yuh, Ike?"

"Well," says I, kinda thin-like, "if I am, I sure didn't go to heaven, judging by the company I sees around me."

"What did yuh do with that valise with the agreements in?" asks Magpie.

"I must 'a' misplaced it," says I.

"Valise?" croaks Baldy Blewett. "Little valise? I seen it out there in the street, but it's all tore up and there ain't nothin' in it."

"Where's Yuma?" asks Mike Pelly. "Anybody seen Yuma?"

"Yuma Yates?" croaks an apparition at the door. "Yuma Yates?"

We all looks at him and marvels that any human being can look like that and still have locomotion left in its legs. His face is as flat as a pancake and he ain't got clothes enough left to flag a hand-car. He comes inside and leans against the wall.

"Wh-what happened to you?" asks Hassayampa.

"Me?"

Yuma's voice is full of tears and kinda squeaks and cracks.

"Wh-what usually happens when a feller with a half-pint throat bites off a gallon chaw? That —— bear went under Pete Gonyer's wagon and I knocked the end-gate out of my face."

Yuma shifts his feet to keep from falling and then he yowls:

"I—I used to be a huh-he-wolf—me. I—I used to ride—kinda. I was a good rider, bub-but I—I overlooked one fuf-fact."

"What was that, Yuma?" asks Magpie.

"Th-the —— bustin' buckers that re-remain after yuh get past Pike's Peak and just before yuh re-reach pickle. She's a multitude, gents—a multitude."

"Let's make it unanimous," says the judge.

ACHIEVEMENT

by **Berton Braley**

"I DO my work." He who in faith can say
That simple phrase, is set upon the way
To bend the will of Fortune to his will.
The world makes place for him whose strength and skill
Rebel at doubt and rankle at delay.

The visions that hold true, the dreams that stay
Are wrought by those who labor, come what may.
Their slogan—be their fortune good or ill—
"I do my work."

Kingdoms may fall and empires lose their sway,
But on their wreck and out of their decay
The toiler shall erect new wonders still,
Urged by an impulse time nor fate can kill,
With this his only vaunt from day to day—
"I do my work!"

THE REGICIDE

by John Buchan

Author of "Prester John"

The Ninth Tale in the Series, "The Path of a King." Each Story Entirely Complete in Itself

The Story behind the Stories

SO THAT the general idea of this series of stories may be more visible in each issue, two of them each time appear together. For in the stories themselves there is practically nothing concrete to indicate any connection between one of them and any of the others. Each story stands entirely on its own feet, complete in itself and differing from all the others in place and time and plot. Yet through them all runs a Path—a Path of a thousand years—"The Path of a King."

As expressed in the author's foreword to the series, it is not for nothing that a great man leaves posterity. The spark once transmitted may smolder for generations under ashes, but at the appointed time it will flare up to warm the world. God never allows waste. Yet we fools rub our eyes and wonder when we see genius come out of the gutter. We none of us know our ancestors beyond a little way. We all of us may have king's blood in our veins. The dago who blacked your boots may be descended by curious byways from Julius Cæsar.

"I saw the younger sons carry the royal blood far down among the people, down even into the kennels of the outcast. Generations follow, but there is that in the stock which is fated to endure. The sons and daughters blunder and sin and perish, but the race goes on, for there is a fine stuff of life in it. Some rags of greatness always cling to it, and somehow the blood drawn from kings it never knew will be royal again. After long years, unheralded and unlooked for, there comes the day of the Appointed Time."

You will note that practically rhe only surface suggestion of any kind of connection between one story and any of the others is that the king's ring of the old Norse viking, introduced in the first story, is more or less casually mentioned in following stories and of course is always in possession of some one descended from that king, though the king himself has long since faded from human memory.

THERE was a sharp grue of ice in the air, as Mr. Nicholas Lovel climbed the rickety wooden stairs to his lodgings in Chancery Lane hard by Lincoln's Inn. That morning he had ridden in from his manor in the Chilterns and still wore his heavy horseman's cloak and the long boots splashed with the mud of the Colne fords.

He had been busy all day with legal matters—conveyances on which his opinion was sought—for, though it was the Christmas vacation, his fame among the city merchants kept him busy in term and out of it. Rarely, he thought, had he known London in so strange a temper. Men scarcely dared to speak above their breath of public things and eyed him fearfully—even the attorneys who licked his boots—as if a careless word spoken in his presence might be their ruin.

For it was known that this careful lawyer stood very near Cromwell, had indeed been his comrade at bed and board from Marston to Dunbar; and, though no Commons man, had more weight than any ten in Parliament. Mr. Lovel could not but be conscious of the tension among his acquaintances, and had he missed to note it there he would have found it in the streets.

Pride's troopers were everywhere, riding in grim posses or off duty and somberly puffing tobacco—vast, silent men lean from the wars. The citizens on the causeway hurried on their errand, eager to find sanctuary from the biting air and the menace of unknown perils. Never had London seen such a Christmas-tide. Every man was moody and careworn, and the bell of Paul's as it tolled the hours seemed a sullen prophet of wo.

His servant met him on the stair.

"He is here," he said. "I waited for him in the Bell Yard and brought him in secretly."

Lovel nodded and stripped off his cloak, giving it to the man.

"Watch the door like a dragon, Matthew," he told him. "For an hour we must be alone. Forbid any one, though it were Sir Harry himself."

The little chamber was bright with the glow of a coal fire. The red curtains had been drawn and one lamp lighted. The single occupant sprawled in a winged leather chair, his stretched-out legs in the firelight but his head and shoulders in shadow. A man entering could not see the face, and Lovel, whose eyes had been weakened by study, peered a second before he closed the door behind him.

"I have come to you, Nick, as always when my mind is in tribulation."

The speaker had a harsh voice, like a bellman's which had been ruined by shouting against crowds. He had got to his feet and seemed an elderly man heavy in body with legs too short for the proportions of his trunk. He wore a soldier's coat and belt, but no sword. His age might have been fifty, but his face was so reddened by weather that it was hard to judge.

The thick curling black locks had little silver in them, but the hair that sprouted from a mole on the chin was gray. His cheeks were full and the heavy mouth was pursed like that of a man in constant painful meditation. He looked at first sight a grazier from the shires or some new-made squire of a moderate estate. But the eyes forbade that conclusion. There was something that brooded and commanded in those eyes—something that might lock the jaw like iron and make their possessor a hammer to break or bend the world.

Mr. Lovel stirred the fire very deliberately and sat himself in the second of the two winged chairs.

"The king?" he queried. "You were in two minds when we last spoke on the matter. I hoped I had persuaded you. Has some new perplexity arisen?"

The other shook his big head, so that for a moment he had the look of a great bull that paws the ground before charging.

"I have no clearness," he said, and the words had such passion behind them that they were almost a groan.

Lovel lay back in his chair with his finger-tips joined, like a juris-consult in the presence of a client.

"Clearness in such matters is not for us mortals," he said. "You are walking dark corridors which the lamp of the law does not light. You are not summoned to do justice, being no judge, but to consider the well-being of the state. Policy, Oliver. Policy, first and last."

The other nodded.

"But policy is two-faced, and I know not which to choose."

"Is it still the business of the trial?" Lovel asked sharply. "We argued that a fortnight since, and I thought I had convinced you. The case has not changed. Let me recapitulate. *Imprimis*, the law of England knows no court which can bring the King of England before it."

"Tchut, man. Do not repeat that. Vane has been clacking it in my ear. I tell you, as I told young Sidney, that we are beyond courts and lawyer's quibbles, and that if England requires it, I will cut off the king's head with the crown on it."

Lovel smiled.

"That is my argument. You speak of a trial, but in justice there can be no trial where there is neither constituted court nor valid law. If you judge the king, 'tis on grounds of policy. Can you defend that policy, Oliver? You yourself have no clearness. Who has? Not Vane. Not Fairfax. Not Whitelocke or Widdrington or Lenthall. Certes, not your old comrade Nick Lovel."

"The Army desires it—notably those in it who are most earnest in God's cause."

"Since when have you found a politic

judgment in raw soldiers? Consider, my friend. If you set the king on his trial, it can have but the one end. You have no written law by which to judge him, so your canon will be your view of the public weal, against which he has most grievously offended. It is conceded your verdict must be guilty and your sentence death. Once put him on trial and you unloose a great stone on a hillside which will gather speed with every yard it journeys. You will put your king to death, and in whose name?"

CROMWELL raised his head which he had sunk between his hands.

"In the name of the Commons of Parliament and all the good people of England."

"Folly, man. Your Commons are a disconsidered rump of which already you have made a laughing-stock. As for your good people of England, you know well that ten out of any dozen are against you. The deed will be done in your own name and that of the hot-heads of the Army. 'Twill be an act of war. Think you that by making an end of the king you will end the king's party?

"Nay, you will give it a martyr. You will create for every woman in England a new saint. You will outrage all sober folk that love order. And at the very moment when you seek to lay down the sword, you make it the sole arbitrament. What have you to say against that?"

"There is no need to speak of his death. What if the court depose him only?"

"You deceive yourself. Once put him on trial and you must go through with it to the end. A deposed king will be like a keg of gunpowder set by your hearth. You can not hide him so that he ceases to be a peril. You can not bind him to terms."

"That is naked truth," said Cromwell grimly. "The man is filled with a devil of pride. When Denbigh and the other lords went to him, he shut the door in their face. I will have no more of running hypocritical agreements. If God's poor people are to be secure, we must draw his fangs and destroy his power for ill. But how to do it?"

And he made a gesture of despair.

"A way must be found. And let it not be that easy way which will most utterly defeat your honest purpose. The knots of the State are to be unraveled not cut with the sword."

Cromwell smiled sadly, and his long face had for the moment a curious look of a puzzled child.

"I believe you to be a godly man, friend Nicholas. But I fear your soul is much overlaid with worldly things, and you lean too much on frail understanding. I, too, am without clearness. I assent to your wisdom, but I can not think it concludes the matter. In truth, we have come in this dark hour to the end of fleshy reasonings. It can not be that the great marvels which the Lord has shown us can end in barrenness. His glorious dispensations must have an honest fruition, for His arm is not shortened."

He rose to his feet and tightened the belt which he had unbuckled.

"I await a sign," he said. "Pray for me, friend, for I am a man in sore perplexity. I lie o' nights at Whitehall in one of the king's rich beds, but my eyes do not close. From you I have got the ripeness of human wisdom, but my heart is not satisfied. I am a seeker with my ear intent to hear God's command, and I doubt not that by some Providence He will yet show me His blessed way."

Lovel stood as if in a muse, while the heavy feet tramped down the staircase. He heard a whispering below and then the soft closing of a door. For maybe five minutes he was motionless; then he spoke to himself after the habit he had.

"The danger's not over," he said, "but I think policy will prevail. If only Vane will cease his juridical chatter. Oliver is still at the cross-roads, but he inclines to the right one. I must see to it that Hugh Peters and his crew manufacture no false providences. Thank God, if our great man is one-third dreamer, he is two-thirds doer, and can weigh his counselors."

Whereupon, feeling sharp-set with the cold and the day's labor, he replenished the fire with a beech fagot, resumed the riding-cloak he had undone and, after giving his servant some instructions, went forth to sup in a tavern. He went unattended, as was his custom. The city was too sunk in depression to be unruly.

HE CROSSED Chancery Lane and struck through the narrow courts which lay between Fleet Street and Holborn. His goal was Gilpin's in Fetter Lane, a quiet place much in favor with those of the long robe.

The streets seemed curiously quiet. It was freezing hard and threatening snow, so he flung a fold of his cloak round his neck, muffling his ears. This deadened his hearing, and his mind also was busy with its own thoughts, so that he did not observe that soft steps dogged him. At the corner of an alley he was tripped up and a heavy garment flung over his head.

He struggled to regain his feet, but an old lameness, got at Naseby, impeded him. The cobbles, too, were like glass, and he fell again, this time backward. His head struck the ground, and though he did not lose consciousness, his senses were dazed. He felt his legs and arms being deftly tied, and yards of some soft stuff enveloping his head. He ceased to struggle as soon as he felt the odds against him and waited on fortune. Voices came to his ears, and it seemed that one of them was a woman's.

The crack on the causeway must have been harder than it appeared, for Mr. Lovel fell into a doze. When he woke, he had some trouble in collecting his wits. He felt no bodily discomfort except a little soreness at the back of his scalp. His captors had trussed him tenderly, for his bonds did not hurt, though a few experiments convinced him that they were sufficiently secure.

His chief grievance was a sharp recollection that he had not supped; but, being a philosopher, he reflected that, though hungry, he was warm. He was in a glass coach driven rapidly on a rough road, and outside the weather seemed to be wild, for the snow was crusted on the window. There were riders in attendance; he could hear the *click-clack* of ridden horses. Sometimes a lantern flashed on the pane and a face peered dimly through the frost. It seemed a face that he had seen before.

Presently Mr. Lovel began to consider his position. Clearly he had been kidnaped, but by whom and to what intent? He reflected with pain that it might be his son's doing, for that gentleman had long been forbidden his door. A rakehell of the Temple and married to a cast-off mistress of Goring's, his son was certainly capable of any evil, but he reminded himself that Jasper was not a fool and would scarcely see his profit in such an escapade.

Besides, he had not the funds to compass an enterprise which must have cost money. He thought of the king's party and dismissed the thought. His opponents had a certain regard for him, and he had the name of moderate. No, if politics touched the business, it was Ireton's doing. Ireton feared his influence with Cromwell. But that sober man of God was no bravo. He confessed himself at a loss.

Mr. Lovel had reached this point in his meditations when the coach suddenly stopped. The door opened, and as he peered into the semi-circle of wavering lamplight, he observed a tall young lady in a riding-coat white with snow flakes. She had dismounted from her horse, and the beast's smoking nostrils were thawing the ice on her sleeve. She wore a mask, but she did not deceive her father.

"Cecily," he cried, astounded out of his calm. "What madcap trick is this?"

The girl for answer flung her bridle to a servant and climbed into the coach beside him. Once more the wheels moved.

"O father, dearest father, pray forgive me. I have been so anxious. When you fell, I begged Tony to give up the plan, but he assured me you had taken no hurt. Tell me you are none the worse."

Mr. Lovel began to laugh, and there was relief in his laugh, for he had been more disquieted than he would have confessed.

"I AM very greatly the worse." He nodded to his bonds. "I do not like your endearments, Cis."

"Promise me not to try to escape and I will cut them."

The girl was very grave as she drew from a reticule beneath her cloak a pair of housewife's scissors. Mr. Lovel laughed louder.

"I promise to bide where I am in this foul weather."

Neatly and swiftly she cut the cords, and he stretched arms and legs in growing comfort.

"Also I have not supped."

"My poor father! But in two hours' time you will have supper. We sleep at—but that I must not tell you."

"Where does this journey end? Am I to have no news at all, my dear?"

"You promised, remember, so I will tell you. Tony and I are taking you to Charlecote."

Mr. Lovel whistled.

"A long road and an ill. The wind blows bitter on Cotswold in December. I would be happier in my own house."

"But not safe."

The girl's voice was very earnest.

"Believe me, dearest father, we have thought only of you. Tony says that London streets will soon be running blood. He has it from secret and sure sources. There is a king's faction in the Army and already it is in league with the Scots and our own party to compass the fall of Cromwell. He says it will be rough work and the innocent will die with the guilty. When he told me that, I feared for your life—and Tony, too, for he loves you. So we carry you to Chaslecote till January is past, for by then Tony says there will be peace in England."

"I thank you, Cis—and Tony also, who loves me. But if your news be right, I have a duty to do. I am of Cromwell's party, as you and Tony are of the king's. You would not have me run from danger."

She primmed her pretty mouth.

"You do not run; you are carried off. Remember your promise."

"But a promise given under duress is not valid in law."

"You are a gentleman, sir, before you are a lawyer. Besides, there are six of Tony's men with us—and all armed."

Mr. Lovel subsided with a chuckle. This daughter of his should have been a man. Would that Heaven had seen fit to grant him such a son!

"Two hours to supper," was what he said. "By the slow pace of our cattle I judge we are on Denham hill. Permit me to doze, my dear. 'Tis the best antidote to hunger. Whew, but it is cold! If you catch a quinsy, blame that foolish Tony of yours."

But, though he closed his eyes, he did not sleep. All his life he had been something of a fatalist, and this temper had endeared him to Cromwell, who held that no man traveled so far as he who did not know the road he was going. But while in Oliver's case the belief came from an ever-present sense of a directing God, in him it was more of a pagan philosophy. Mr. Lovel was devout after his fashion, but he had a critical mind and stood a little apart from enthusiasm. He saw man's life as a thing foreordained, yet to be conducted under a pretense of freedom, and while a defender of liberty his admiration inclined more naturally to the rigor of law. He would oppose all mundane tyrannies but bow to the celestial bondage.

Now it seemed that Fate had taken charge of him through the medium of two green lovers. He was to be spared the toil of decision and dwell in an enforced seclusion. He was not averse to it. He was not Cromwell with Cromwell's heavy burden; he was not even a Parliament man; only a private citizen who wished greatly for peace. He had labored for peace both in field and council, and that very evening he had striven to guide the ruler of England. Assuredly he had done a citizen's duty and might now rest.

His thoughts turned to his family—the brave girl and the worthless boy. He believed he had expunged Jasper from his mind, but the recollection had still power to pain him. That was the stuff of which the king's faction was made, half-witted rakes who were arrogant without pride and volcanic without courage.

Not all, perhaps. The good Tony would be a welcome enough son-in-law, though Cecily would always be the better man. The young Oxfordshire squire was true to his own loyalties, and a mortal could be no more. He liked the flaxen poll of him which contrasted well with Cecily's dark beauty—and his jolly laugh and the noble carriage of his head. Yet what wisdom did that head contain which could benefit the realm of England?

This story of a mad plot! Mr. Lovel did not reject it. It was of a piece with a dozen crazy devices of the king. The man was no Englishman but an Italian priest who loved dark ways. A little good sense, a little honesty, and long ago there would have been a settlement. But to treat with Charles was to lay foundations on rotten peat.

Oddly enough, now that he was perforce quit of any share in the business, he found his wrath rising against the king. A few hours back he had spoken for him. Had he been wrong after all? He wondered. Oliver's puzzled face rose before him. He had learned to revere that strange man's perplexities. No brain was keener to grasp an argument, for the general was as quick at a legal point as any lawyer.

When, therefore, he still hesitated before what seemed a final case, it was well to search for hidden flaws. Above all when he gave no reason, it was wise to listen to him, for often his mind flew ahead of logic, and at such times he was inspired. Lovel himself and Vane and Fairfax had put the politic plea which seemed unanswerable, and yet Oliver halted and asked for a sign. Was it possible that the other course, the wild course, Ireton's course, was the right one?"

MR. LOVEL had bowed to Fate and his captors and, conscious that no action could follow on any conclusion he might reach, felt free to indulge his thoughts. He discovered these growing sterner. He reviewed his argument against the king's trial. Its gravamen lay in the certainty that trial meant death.

The plea against death was that it would antagonize three-fourths of England and make a martyr out of a fool. Would it do no more? Were there no gains to set against that loss? To his surprize he found himself confessing a gain.

He had suddenly become impatient with folly. It was Cromwell's mood, as one who, living under the eye of God, scorned the vaporings of pedestaled mortals. Mr. Lovel by a different road reached the same goal. An abiding sense of fate ordering the universe made him intolerant of trivial claims of prerogative and blood. Kingship for him had no sanctity save in so far as it was truly kingly. Were honest folk to be harried because of the whims of a man whose remote ancestor had been a fortunate bandit? Charles had time and again broken faith with his people and soaked the land in blood. In law he could do no wrong; but unless God slept, punishment should follow crime, and if the law gave no aid, the law must be dispensed with. Man was not made for it but it for man.

The jurist in him pulled up with a start. He was arguing against all his training. But was the plea false? He had urged on Cromwell that the matter was one of policy. Agreed. But which was the politic road? If the king lost his head, there would beyond doubt be a sullen struggle. Sooner or later the regicides would fall—of that he had no doubt. But what of the ultimate fate of England? They would have struck a blow against privilege which would never be forgotten. In future all kings would walk warily. In time the plain man would come to his own. In the long run was this not politic?

" 'Tis a good thing my mouth is shut for some weeks," he told himself. "I am coming round to Ireton. I am no fit company for Oliver."

He mused a little on his inconstancy. It had not been a frequent occurrence in his life. But now he seemed to have got a sudden illumination, such as visited Cromwell in his prayers. What had been cloudy before now showed very bright, and the little lamp of reason he had once used was put out by an intolerable sunlight. He felt himself quickened to an unwonted poetry. His whole outlook had changed, but the change brought no impulse to action. He submitted to be idle, since it was so fated. He was rather glad of it, for he felt weary and giddy in mind.

But the new thoughts once awakened ranged on their courses. To destroy the false kingship would open the way for the true. He was no leveler; he believed in kings, who were kings indeed. The world could not do without its leaders. Oliver was such a one, and others would rise up. Why reverence a brocaded puppet larded by a priest with oil, when there were men who needed no robes or sacring to make them kingly? Teach the Lord's anointed his mortality, and there would be hope in the years to come of a true anointing.

He turned to his daughter.

"I believe your night's work, Cis, has been a fortunate thing for our family."

She smiled and patted his hand, and at the moment with a great jolting the coach pulled up. Presently lanterns showed at the window, the door was opened, and Sir Anthony Colledge stood revealed in the driving snow.

In the Chilterns it must have been falling for hours, for the road was a foot deep and the wind had made great drifts among the beech boles. The lover looked somewhat sheepish as he swept a bow to his prisoner.

"You are a noted horse-doctor, sir," he said. "The off leader has gotten a colic. Will you treat him? Then I purpose to leave him with a servant in some near-by farm and put a ridden horse in his place."

Mr. Lovel leaped from the coach as nimbly as his old wound permitted. It was true that the doctoring of horses was his hobby. He loved them and had a way with them.

The medicine-box was got out of the locker and the party grouped round the gray Flemish horses which stood smoking in the yellow slush. The one with the colic had its legs stretched wide; its flanks heaved and spasms shook its hind quarters.

Mr. Lovel set to work and mixed a dose of spiced oil and spirits, which he coaxed down its throat. Then he very gently massaged certain corded sinews in its belly.

"Get him under cover now, Tony," he said, "and tell your man to bed him warm and give him a bucket of hot water strained from oatmeal and laced with this phial. In an hour he will be easy."

The beast was led off, another put in its place, and the postilions were cracking their whips when out of the darkness a knot of mounted men rode into the lamplight. There were at least a dozen of them, and at their head rode a man who at the sight of Lovel pulled up sharp.

"Mr. Lovel!" he cried. "What brings you into these wilds in such weather? Can I be of service? My house is not a mile off."

"I thank you, Colonel Flowerdue, but I think the mischief is now righted. I go on a journey into Oxfordshire with my daughter, and the snow has delayed us."

He presented the young Parliament soldier, a cousin of Fairfax, to Cecily and Tony, the latter of whom eyed with disfavor the posse of grave Ironside troopers.

"You will never get to Wendover this night," said Flowerdue, "The road higher up is smothered four feet deep. See, I will show you a woodland road which the wind has kept clear, and I protest that your company sleep the night with me at Downing."

He would take no denial, and indeed in the face of his news to proceed would have been folly. Even Sir Anthony Colledge confessed it wryly. One of Flowerdue's men mounted to the postilion's place, and the coach was guided through a belt of beeches and over a strip of heath to the gates of a park.

Cecily seized her father's hand.

"You have promised, remember."

"I have promised," he replied. "Tomorrow, if the weather clears, I will go with you to Chastlecote."

He spoke no more till they were at the house door, for the sense of fate hung over him like a cloud. His cool equable soul was stirred to its deeps. There was surely a grim foreordering in this chain of incidents. But for the horse's colic there would have been no halt. But for his skill in horse-doctoring the sick beast would have been cut loose, and Colonel Flowerdue's party would have met only a coach laboring through the snow and would not have halted to discover its occupants.

He was a prisoner bound by a promise, but this meeting with Flowerdue had opened up a channel to communicate with London and that was not forbidden. It flashed on him suddenly that the change of mind which he had suffered was no longer a private matter. He had now the power to act on it.

HE WAS extraordinarily averse to the prospect. Was it mere petulance that had swung round his opinions so violently during the journey? He examined himself and found his new convictions unshaken. It was what the hot-gospelers would call a "Holy Ghost conversion." Well, let it rest there. Why spread the news beyond his own bosom? There were doctors enough inspecting the health of the State. Let his part be to stand aside.

With something like fear he recognized that that part was no longer possible. He had been too directly guided by Destiny to refuse the last stage. Cromwell was waiting on a providence, and of that providence it was clear that Fate had made him the channel. In the coach he had surrendered himself willingly to an unseen direction; and now he dared not refuse the same docility. He, who for usual was ripe-balanced, mellow in judgment, felt at the moment the gloomy impulsion of the fanatic. He was only a pipe for the Almighty to sound through.

In the hall at Downing the logs were stirred to a blaze and food and drink brought in a hospitable bustle.

"I have a letter to write before I sleep," Mr. Lovel told his daughter. "I will pray from Colonel Flowerdue the use of his cabinet."

Cecily looked at him inquiringly, and he laughed.

"The posts at Chastlecote are infrequent, Cis, and I may well take the chance when it offers. I assure you I look forward happily to a month of idleness, stalking Tony's mallards and following Tony's hounds."

In the cabinet he wrote half a dozen lines setting out simply the change in his views.

"If I know Oliver," he told himself, "I have given him the sign he seeks. I am clear it is God's will, but Heaven help the land—Heaven help us all."

Having written, he lay back in his chair and mused.

When Colonel Flowerdue entered, he found a brisk and smiling gentleman, sealing a letter.

"Can you spare a man to ride express with this missive to town? It is for General Cromwell's private hand."

"Assuredly. He will start at once, lest the storm worsens. It is business of state?"

"High business of state, and I think the last I am likely to meddle with."

Mr. Lovel had taken from his finger a thick gold ring carved with a much worn cognizance. He held it up in the light of the candle.

"This thing was once a king's," he said. "As the letter touches the affairs of his Majesty, I think it fitting to seal it with a king's signet."

The Marplot*

The Tenth Tale in the Series, "The Path of a King." Each Story Entirely Complete in Itself

AT A little after six o'clock on the evening of Saturday, the twelfth of October in the year 1678, the man known commonly as Edward Copshaw came to a halt opposite the narrow entry of the Savoy, just west of the queen's palace of Somerset House.

He was a personage of many names. In the register of the Benedictine lay-brothers he had been entered as James Singleton. Sundry Paris tradesmen had known him as Captain Edwards, and at the moment were longing to know more of him. In a certain secret and tortuous correspondence he figured as Octavius, and you may still read his sprawling script in the record office.

His true name, which was Nicholas Lovel, was known at Weld House, at the White Horse Tavern and the town lodgings of my lords Powis and Bellasis, but had you asked for him by that name at these quarters, you would have been met by a denial of all knowledge. For it was a name which for good reasons he and his patrons desired to see forgotten.

He was a man not yet forty, furtive, ill-looking and lean to emaciation. In complexion he was as swarthy as the king, and his feverish black eyes were set deep under bushy brows. A badly dressed peruke concealed his hair. His clothes were the remnants of old finery, well cut and of good stuff, but patched and threadbare.

He wore a sword and carried a stout rustic staff. The weather was warm for October and the man had been walking fast, for, as he peered through the Autumn brume into the dark entry, he mopped his face with a dirty handkerchief.

The exercise had brought back his ailment and he shivered violently. Punctually as Autumn came round he had these fevers, the legacy of a year once spent in the Pisan marshes. He had doped himself with Jesuit's powder got from a woman of Madam Carwell's, so that he was half-dead and blind. Yet in spite of the drug the fever went on burning.

But to any one looking close it would have seemed that he had more to trouble him than a malarial bout. The man was patently in an extreme terror. His lantern-jaw hung as loose as if it had been broken. His lips moved incessantly. He gripped savagely at his staff, and next moment dropped it. He fussed with the hilt of his sword. He was a coward, and yet had come out to do murder.

* * *

IT HAD taken real panic to bring him to the point. Throughout his tattered life he had run many risks, but never a peril so instant as this. As he had followed his quarry that afternoon, his mind had been full of broken memories. Bitter thoughts they were, for Luck had not been kind to him.

A childhood in cheap lodgings in London and a dozen French towns, wherever there was a gaming-table and pigeons for his father to pluck. Then drunken father and draggle-tailed mother had faded from the scene, and the boy had been left to a life of odd jobs and fleeting patrons. His name was against him, for long before he reached manhood, the king had come back to his own, and his grandfather's bones had jangled on a Tyburn gibbet. There was no hope for one of his family, though Heaven knew his father had been a stout enough Royalist.

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*See note to preceding story.

At eighteen the boy had joined the Roman Church, and at twenty relapsed to the fold of Canterbury. But his bread and butter lay with Rome, and in his trade few questions were asked about creed, provided the work were done. He had had streaks of fortune, for there had been times when he lay soft and ate delicately and scattered money.

But nothing lasted. He had no sooner made purchase with great men and climbed a little than the scaffolding fell from his feet. He thought meanly of human nature, for in his profession he must cringe or snarl, always the undermost dog. Yet he had some liking for the priests, who had been kind to him, and there was always a glow in his heart for the pale wife who dwelt with his child in the attic in Billingsgate. Under happier circumstances Mr. Nicholas Lovel might have shone with the domestic virtues.

Business had been good of late, if that could ever be called good which was undertaken under perpetual fear. He had been given orders which took him into Whig circles, and had made progress among the group of the King's Head Tavern. He had even won an entrance into my Lord Shaftesbury's great house in Aldersgate Street. He was then under false colors, being a spy of the other camp, but something in him found itself at home among the patriots.

A resolve had been growing to cut loose from his old employers and settle down among the Whigs in comparative honesty. It was the winning cause, he thought, and he longed to get his head out of kennels. But that had happened yesterday which scattered his fine dreams and brought him face to face with terror. God's curse on that ferrety justice, Sir Edwin Berry Godfrey.

He had for some time had his eye on the man. The year before he had run across him in Montpelier, being then engaged in a very crooked business, and had fancied that the magistrate had also his eye on him. Taught by long experience to watch potential enemies, he had taken some trouble over the lean high-peaked dignitary.

Presently he had found out curious things. The austere Protestant was a friend of the duke's man, Ned Coleman, and used to meet him at Colonel Weldon's house. This hinted at blackmailable stuff in the magistrate, so Lovel took to haunting his premises in Hartshorn Lane by Charing Cross but found no evidence which pointed to anything but a prosperous trade in wood and sea-coal. Fagots, but not the treasonable kind! Try as he might, he could get no farther with that pillar of the magistracy, my Lord Danby's friend, the beloved of Aldermen.

He hated his solemn face, his prim mouth, his condescending stoop. Such a man was incased in proof armor of public esteem, and he heeded Mr. Lovel no more than the rats in the gutter.

But the day before had come a rude awakening. All this talk of a Popish plot discovered by the Salamanca doctor, promised a good harvest to Mr. Lovel. He himself had much to tell and more to invent. Could he but manage it discreetly, he might assure his fortune with the Whigs and get to his feet at last. God knew it was time, for the household in the Billingsgat attic was pretty threadbare.

His busy brain had worked happily on the plan. He would be the innocent, cursed from childhood with undesired companions, who would suddenly awaken in horror to the guilt of things he had not understood. There would be a welcome for a well-informed penitent. But he must move slowly and at his own time. And now he was being himself hustled into the dock, perhaps soon to the gallows.

For the afternoon before he had been sent for by Godfrey and most searchingly examined. He had thought himself the spy, when all the while he had been the spied-upon. The accursed justice knew everything. He knew a dozen episodes, each enough to hang a poor man. He knew of Mr. Lovel's dealings with the Jesuits Walsh and Phayre, and of a certain little hovel in Battersea whose annals were not for the public ear. Above all he knew of the great Jesuit consult in April at the Duke of York's house. That would have mattered little—indeed, the revelation of it was part of Mr. Lovel's plans, but he knew Mr. Lovel's precise connection with it and had damning evidence to boot.

The spy shivered when he remembered the scene in Hartshorn Lane. He had blundered and stuttered and confessed his alarm by his confusion, while the justice recited what he had fondly believed was known only to the Almighty and some few whose mortal interest it was to be silent. He had been amazed that he had not been there and then committed to Newgate. He had not gone home that night but wandered the streets and slept cold under a Marylebone hedge. At first he had thought of flight, but the recollection of his household detained him. He would not go under. One pompous fool alone stood between him and safety—perhaps fortune. Long before morning he had resolved that Godfrey should die.

He had expected a difficult task, but lo, it was unbelievably easy! About ten o'clock that day he had found Sir Edmund in the Strand. He walked hurriedly as if on urgent business, and Lovel had followed him up through Covent Garden, across the Oxford road and into the Marylebone fields, There the magistrate's pace had slackened, and he had loitered like a truant schoolboy among the furse and briars. His stoop had deepened, his head was sunk on his breast, his hands twined behind him.

Now was the chance for the murderer lurking in the brambles. It would be easy to slip behind and give him the sword-point. But Mr. Lovel tarried. It may have been compunction, but more likely it was fear. It was also curiosity, for the magistrate's face, as he passed Lovel's hiding-place, was distraught and melancholy. Here was another man with bitter thoughts—perhaps with a deadly secret. For a moment the spy felt a certain kinship.

Whatever the reason, he let the morning go by. About two in the afternoon Godfrey left the fields and struck westward by a bridle-path that led through the Paddington Woods to the marshes north of Kensington. He walked slowly but with an apparent purpose. Lovel stopped for a moment at the White House, a dirty little hedge tavern, to swallow a mouthful of ale and tell a convincing lie to John Rawson, the innkeeper, in case it should come in handy some day.

THEN occurred a diversion. Young Mr. Forset's harriers swept past, a dozen riders attended by a ragged foot following. They checked by the path, and in the confusion of the halt Godfrey seemed to vanish. It was not till close on Paddington village that Mr. Lovel picked him up again. He was waiting for the darkness, for he knew that he could never do what he proposed in cold daylight. He hoped that the magistrate would make for Kensington, for that was a lonely path.

But Sir Edmund seemed to be possessed of a freakish devil. No sooner was he in Paddington than, after buying a glass of milk from a milkwoman, he set off cityward again by the Oxford road. Here there were many people, foot-travelers and coaches, and Mr. Lovel began to fear for his chance. But at Tyburn Godfrey struck into the fields and presently was in the narrow lane called St. Martin's Hedges, which led to Charing Cross.

Now was the occasion. The dusk was falling, and a light mist was creeping up from Westminster. Lovel quickened his steps, for the magistrate was striding at a round pace. Then came mischance. First one then another of the Marylebone cowkeepers blocked the lane with their driven beasts. The place became as public as Bartholemew's Fair. Before he knew, he was at Charing Cross.

He was now in a foul temper. He cursed his weakness in the morning, when fate had given him every opportunity. He was in despair, too. His case was hopeless unless he struck soon. If Godfrey returned to Hartshorn Lane, he himself would be in Newgate on the morrow. Fortunately the strange man did not seem to want to go home. He moved east along the Strand, Lovel a dozen yards behind him.

Out from the dark Savoy entry ran a woman, screaming and with her hair flying. She seized on Godfrey and clutched his knees. There was a bloody fray inside, in which her husband fought against odds. The watch was not to be found. Would he, the great magistrate, intervene? The very sight of his famous face would quell riot.

Sir Edmund looked up and down the street, pinched his chin and peered down the precipitous Savoy causeway. Whatever the burden on his soul, he did not forget his duty.

"Show me," he said, and followed her into the gloom.

Lovel outside stood for a second, hesitating. His chance had come. His foe had gone of his own will into the place in all England where murder could be most safely done. But now that the moment had come at last, he was all of a tremble and his breath choked. Only the picture, always horribly clear in his mind, of a gallows dark against a pale sky and the little fire beneath where the entrails of traitors were burned—a nightmare which had long ridden him—nerved him to the next step.

"His life or mine," he told himself, as he groped his way into a lane as steep, dank and black as the sides of a well.

For some twenty yards he stumbled in an air thick with offal and garlic. He heard steps ahead, the boots of the doomed magistrate and the slipshod patterns of the woman. Then they stopped; his quarry seemed to be ascending a stair on the right. It was a wretched tenement of wood, two hundred years old, once a garden-house attached to the Savoy Palace.

Lovel scrambled up some rickety steps and found himself on the rotten planks of a long passage, which was lighted by a small window giving to the west. He heard the sound of a man slipping at the other end and something like an oath. Then a door slammed violently, and the place shook. After that it was quiet. Where was the bloody fight that Godfrey had been brought to settle?

It was very dark there; the window in the passage was only a square of misty gray. Lovel felt eery, a strange mood for an assassin. Magistrate and woman seemed to have been spirited away. He plucked up courage and continued, one hand on the wall on his left.

Then a sound broke the silence—a scuffle and the long grate of something heavy dragged on a rough floor. Presently his fingers felt a door. The noise was inside that door. There were big cracks in the paneling through which an eye could look, but all was dark within. There were human beings moving there and speaking softly. Very gingerly he tried the hasp, but it was fastened firm inside.

Suddenly some one in the room struck a flint and lighted a lantern. Lovel set his eyes to a crack and stood very still. The woman had gone, and the room held three men. One lay on the floor with a coarse kerchief such as grooms wear knotted round his throat.

Over him bent a man in a long coat with a cape, a man in a dark peruke, whose face was clear in the light of the lantern. Lovel knew him for one Bedloe, a led-captain and card-sharper, whom he had himself employed on occasion.

The third man stood apart and appeared from his gesticulations to be speaking rapidly. He wore his own sandy hair, and every line of his mean freckled face told of excitement and fear. Him also Lovel recognized—Carstairs, a Scotch informer who had once made a handsome living through spying on conventicles, but had now fallen into poverty, owing to conducting an affair of Buckingham's with a brutality which that fastidious nobleman had not bargained for.

Lovel rubbed his eyes and looked again. He knew likewise the man on the floor. It was Sir Edmund Godfrey and Sir Edmund Godfrey was dead.

The men were talking.

"No blood-letting," said Bedloe. "This must be a dry job. Though, by God, I wish I could stick my knife into him—once for Trelawney, once for Frewen and a dozen times for myself. Through this swine I have festered a twelvemonth in Little Ease."

LOVEL'S first thought, as he stared was an immense relief. His business had been done for him, and he had escaped the guilt of it. His second, that here lay a chance of fair profit. Godfrey was a great man, and Bedloe and Carstairs were the seediest of rogues. He might make favor for himself with the government if he had them caught red-handed. It would help his status in Aldersgate Street. But he must act at once, or the murderers would be gone. He tiptoed back along the passage, tumbled down the crazy steps and ran up the steep entry to where he saw a glimmer of light from the Strand.

At the gate he all but fell into the arms of a man. It was a powerful fellow, for it was like running against a brick wall. Two strong arms gripped Lovel by the shoulder, and a face looked into his.

There was little light in the street, but the glow from the window of a court *perruquier* was sufficient to reveal the features. Lovel saw a gigantic face, with a chin so long that the mouth seemed to be only halfway down it. Small eyes, red and fiery, were set deep under a beetling forehead. The skin was a dark purple, and the wig framing it was so white and fleecy that the man had the appearance of a malevolent black-faced sheep.

Lovel gasped, as he recognized the celebrated Salamanca doctor. He was the man above all others whom he most wished to see.

"Dr. Oates," he cried. "There's bloody work in the Savoy. I was passing through a minute agone, and I saw that noble justice, Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, lie dead, and his murderers beside the body. Quick, and let us get the watch and take them red-handed."

The big paws, like a gorilla's, were withdrawn from his shoulders. The purple complexion seemed to go nearly black, and the wide mouth opened as if to bellow. But the sound which emerged was only a whisper.

"By the maircy of Gaad we will have 'em! A maist haarid and unnaitural craime. I vill take 'em with my own haands. Here is one who will help."

And he turned to a man who had come up and who looked like a city tradesman.

"Lead on, honest fellow, and we will see justice done. 'Tis pairt of the bloody plaat. I foresaw it. I warned Sir Edmund, but he flouted me. Ah, poor soul, he has paid for his unbelief."

Lovel, followed by Oates and the other whom he called Prance, dived again into the darkness. Now he had no fears. He saw himself acclaimed with the doctor as the savior of the nation, and the door of Aldersgate Street opened at his knocking. The man Prance produced a lantern and lighted them up the steps and into the tumbledown passage. Fired with a sudden valor, Lovel drew his sword and led the way to the sinister room. The door was open, and the place lay empty, save for the dead body.

Oates stood beside it, looking with his bandy legs, great shoulders and bull-neck, like some forest baboon.

"Oh, maast hoanorable and noble victim!" he cried. "England will maarn you, and the spawn of Raam will maarn you, for by this deed they have rigged for thaimselves the gallows. Maark ye, Sir Edmund is the proto-martyr of this new fight for the Praatestant faith. He has died that the people may live, and by his death Goad has given England the sign she required. Ah, Prance, how little Tony Shaston will exult in our news! 'Twill be to him like a bone to a cur-dog to take his ainemies thus red-haanded."

"By your leave, sir," said Lovel, "those same enemies have escaped us. I saw them here five minutes since, but they have gone to earth. What say you to a hue-and-cry—though this Savoy is a snug warren to hide vermin."

Oates seemed to be in no hurry. He took the lantern from Prance and scrutinized Lovel's face with savage intensity.

"Ye saw thein, you say. I think, friend, I have seen *you* before and I doubt in no good quarter. There's a Paapist air about ye."

"If you have seen me, 'twas in the house of my Lord Shaftesbury, whom I have the honor to serve," said Lovel stoutly.

"Whoy, that is an haanest house enough. What like were the villains, then? Jaisuits, I'll warrant? Foxes from St. Omer's airth?"

"They were two common cutthroats whose names I know."

"Tools, belike. Fingers of the Paape's hand. Ye seem to have a good acquaintance among rogues, Mr. What's-your-name."

THE man Prance had disappeared, and Lovel suddenly saw his prospects less bright. The murderers were being given a chance to escape, and to his surprize he found himself in a fret to get after them. Oates had clearly no desire for their capture, and the reason flashed on his mind.

The murder had come most opportunely for him, and he sought to lay it at Jesuit doors. It would ill suit his plan if only two common rascals were to swing for it. Far better let it remain a mystery open to awful guesses.

Omne ignotum pro horrifico. Lovel's temper was getting the better of his prudence, and the sight of this monstrous baboon with his mincing speech stirred in him a strange abhorrence.

"I can bear witness that the men who did the deed were no more Jesuits than you. One is just out of Newgate, and the other is a blackguard Scot late dismissed from the Duke of Buckingham's service."

"Ye lie," and Oates' rasping voice was close to his ear. "'Tis an incraidible tale.

Will ye outface me, who alone discovered the Plaat, and dispute with me on high poalicy? Now I come to look at it, ye have a true Jaisuite face. I maind of ye at St. Omer's. I judge you an accoamplice——"

At that moment Prance returned, and with him another, a man in a dark peruke wearing a long coat with a cape. Lovel's breath went from him as he recognized Bedloe.

"There is the murderer," he cried in a sudden fury. "I saw him handle the body, I charge you to hold him."

Bedloe halted and looked at Oates, who nodded. Then he strode up to Lovel and took him by the throat.

"Withdraw your words, you dog," he said, "or I will cut your throat. I have but this moment landed at the river stairs and heard of this horrid business. If you say you have ever seen me before, you lie most foully. Quick, you ferret. Will Bedloe suffers no man to charge his honor."

The strong hands on his neck, the fierce eyes of the bravo, brought back Lovel's fear and with it his prudence. He saw very plain the game, and he realized that he must assent to it. His contrition was deep and voluble.

"I withdraw," he stammered, "and humbly crave pardon. I have never seen this honest gentleman before."

"But ye saw this foul murder, and though the laight was dim, ye saw the murderers, and they had the Jaisuitical air?"

Oates' menacing voice had more terror for Lovel than Bedloe's truculence.

"Beyond doubt," he replied.

"Whoy, that is so far good," and the doctor laughed. "Ye will be helped later to remember the names for the benefit of his Maajesty's court. 'Tis time we set to work. Is the place quiet?"

"As the grave, doctor," said Prance.

"Then I will unfold to you my pairpose. This noble magistrate is foully murdered by pairsons unknown as yet, but whom this haanest man will swear to have been disguised Jaisuits. Now in the sairvice of Goad and the king 'tis raight to pretermit no aiffort to bring the guilty to justice. The paiple of England are already roused to a holy fairvor, and this horrid craime will be as the paistol-flash to the powder-caask.

"But that the craime may have its full effaict on the paapulace 'tis raight to take some trouble with the staging. 'Tis raight so to dispose of the boady that the complaicity of the Paapists will be clear to every doubting fool. I, Taitus Oates, take upon myself this responsibility, seeing that under Goad I am the chosen ainstrument for the paiple's salvation. To Soamersait Haase with it, say I, which is known for a haaunt of the paapistically minded. The postern ye know of is open, Mr. Prance?"

"I have seen to it," said the man, who seemed to conduct himself in this wild business with the decorum of a merchant in his shop.

"Up with him, then," said Oates.

Prance and Bedloe swung the corpse on their shoulders and moved out, while the doctor, gripping Lovel's arm like a vice, followed at a little distance.

The Savoy was very quiet that night, and very dark. The few loiterers who observed the procession must have shrugged their shoulders and turned aside, jealous only to keep out of trouble. Such sights were not uncommon in the Savoy. They entered a high ruinous house on the East Side, and after threading various passages, reached a door which opened on a flight of broken steps where it was hard for more than one to pass at a time. Lovel heard the carriers of the dead grunting, as they squeezed up with their burden. At the top another door gave on an out-house in the yard of Somerset House between the stables and the west water-gate. Lovel, as he stumbled after them, with Oates' bulk dragging at his arm, was in a confusion of mind such as his mean time-serving life had never known.

He was in mortal fear, and yet his quaking heart would suddenly be braced by a gust of anger. He knew he was a rogue, but there were limits to roguery, and something in him—conscience, maybe, or forgotten gentility—sickened at this outrage. He had an impulse to defy them, to gain the street and give the alarm to honest men.

These fellows were going to construct a crime in their own way which would bring death to the innocent. Mr. Lovel trembled at himself and had to think hard on his family in the Billingsgate attic to get back his common sense.

HE WOULD not be believed if he spoke out. Oates would only swear that he was the culprit, and Oates had the ear of the courts and the mob. Besides, he had too many dark patches in his past. It was not for such as he to be finicking.

The body was pushed under an old truckle-bed which stood in the corner, and a mass of frails, such as gardeners use, flung over it for concealment. Oates rubbed his hands.

"The good waark goes naicely," he said. "Sir Edmund dead, and for a week the good fawk of London are a-fevered. Then the harrid discovery, and such a Praatestant uprising as will shake the maightiest from his pairch. Wonderful are Goad's ways and surprizing His jaidgments! Every step must be weighed, since it is the Laard's business. Five days we must give this city to grow uneasy, and then— The boady will be safe here?"

"I alone have the keys," said Prance.

The doctor counted on his thick fingers.

"Monday—Tuesday—Waidnesday—ay, Waidnesday's the day. Captain Bedloe, ye have charge of the removal. Before dawn by the water-gate, and then a chair and a trusty man to cairry it to the plaace of discovery. Ye have appainted the spoat?"

"Any ditch in the Marylebone fields," said Bedloe.

"And before ye remove it—on the Tuesday naight, haply—ye will run the boady through with his sword—Sir Edmund's sword."

"So you tell me," said Bedloe gruffly, "but I see no reason in it. The foolishest apothecary will be able to tell how the man met his death."

Oates grinned and laid his finger to his nose.

"Ye laack subtlety, fraind. The priests of Baal must be met with their own waipons. Look ye. This poor man is found with his sword in his braist. 'He has killed himself,' says the fool. 'Not so,' say the apothecaries. 'Then why the sword?' asks the coroner. 'Because of the daivilish cunning of his murderers,' says Doctor Taitus Oates. 'A clear proof that the Jaisuits are in it,' says every honest Praatistant. D'ye take me?"

Bedloe declared with oaths his admiration of the doctor's wit, and good-humor filled the hovel. All but Lovel, who once again was wrestling with something elemental in him that threatened to ruin everything. He remembered the bowed, stumbling figure that had gone before him in the Marylebone meadows. Then he had been its enemy; now by a queer contortion of the mind he thought of himself as the only protector of that cold clay under the bed—honored in life, but in death a poor pawn in a rogue's cause.

He stood a little apart from the others near the door, and his eye sought it furtively. He was not in the plot, and yet the plotters did not trouble about him. They assumed his complaisance. Doubtless they knew his shabby past.

He was roused by Oates' voice. The doctor was arranging his plan of campaign with gusto. Bedloe was to disappear to the west country till the time came for him to offer his evidence. Prance was to go about his peaceful trade till Bedloe gave him the cue. It was a masterly stratagem—Bedloe to start the ball, Prance to be accused as accomplice and then on his own account to give the other scoundrel corroboration.

"Attend, you sir," the doctor shouted to Lovel. "Ye will be called to swear to the murderers whom this haanest man will name. If ye be a true Praatestant, ye will repeat the laisson I taich you. If not, ye will be set down as one of the villains and the good fawk of this city will tear the limbs from ye at my nod. Be well advaised, my friend, for I hold you in my haand."

And Oates raised a great paw and opened and shut it.

Lovel mumbled assent. Fear had again descended on him. He heard dimly the doctor going over the names of those to be accused.

"You must bring in one of the sairvants of this place," he said. "Some common paarter, who has no friends."

"Trust me," said Prance. "I will find a likely fellow among the queen's household. I have several in my mind for the honor."

"Truly the plaace is a nest of Paapists," said Oates. "And not such as you, Mr. Prance, who putt England before the Paape. Ye are worth a score of Praatestants to the good caause, and it will be remaimbered. Be assured it will be remaimbered. You are clear about the main villains. Walsh, you say, and Pritchard and the man called Le Fevre?"

"The last most of all. But they are sharp-nosed as hounds, and unless we go warily, they will give us the slip, and we must fall back on lesser game."

"Le Fevre," Oates mouthed the name. "The queen's confessor. I was spit upon by him at St. Omer and would wipe out the affront. A dog of a Frainch priest! A man I have long abharred."

"So also have I."

Prance had venom in his level voice.

"But he is no Frenchman. He is English as you—a Phayre out of Huntingdon."

The name penetrated Lovel's dulled wits. Phayre. It was the one man who in his father's life had shown him unselfish kindness. Long ago in Paris this Phayre had been his teacher, had saved him from starvation, had treated him with a gentleman's courtesy.

Even his crimes had not estranged this friend. Phayre had baptized his child and tended his wife when he was in hiding. But a week ago he had spoken a kindly word in the Mall to one who had rarely a kind word from an honest man.

That day had been to the spy a revelation of odd corners in his soul. He had mustered in the morning the resolution to kill one man. Now he discovered a scruple which bade him at all risks avert the killing of another. He perceived very clearly what the decision meant—desperate peril, perhaps ruin and death.

He dare not delay, for in a little he would be too deep in the toils. He must escape and be the first with the news of Godfrey's death in some potent quarter. Buckingham, who was a great prince. Or Danby. Or the king himself.

The cunning of a lifetime failed him in that moment. He slipped through the door, but his coat caught in a splinter of wood, and the rending of it gave the alarm. As with quaking heart he ran up the silent stableyard toward the Strand gate, he felt close on him the wind of the pursuit. In the dark he slipped on a patch of horse-dung and was down. Something heavy fell atop of him, and the next second a gross agony tore the breath from him.

FIVE minutes later Bedloe was unknotting a coarse kerchief and stuffing it into his pocket. It was the same that had strangled Godfrey.

"A good riddance," said Oates. "The fool had seen too much and would have proved but a sorry witness. Now by the mairciful dispensation of God he has ceased to trouble us. You know him, Captain Bedloe?"

"A Papistical cur, and white-livered at that," the bravo answered.

"And his boady? It must be proamptly disposed of."

"An easy task. There is the Savoy water-gate and in an hour the tide will run. He has no friends to inquire after him."

Oates rubbed his hands and cast his eyes upward.

"Great are the doings of the Laard," he said, "and wonderful in our saight!"

SWIFT CAVALRY MARCHES

by H. P.

LATE on July 15, 1866, General George A. Custer and a hundred troopers started from Fort Wallace on Smoky Hill River for a two hundred mile ride to Fort Harker, the western terminus of the Kansas, Pacific Railroad. His purpose was to obtain supplies for the rest of his force, which was marooned at Wallace because of used-up horses. He planned to push forward at top speed as far as Fort Hays, near the Smoky Hill, and there leave practically all his men while he went ahead to arrange to have a train of supplies made up.

In his "My Life on the Plains," he says he and his men reached Fort Hays at three o'clock in the morning of the eighteenth, "having made a hundred and fifty miles in fifty-five hours, including all halts." With four men he made Harker, sixty miles, in twelve hours, without a change of animals. This was immediately after the Kidder massacre.

In commenting on this ride he says that, while above the average for speed, where any number of mounted men were concerned, he bettered this record by moving a much larger number of troops sixty miles in fifteen hours. In the following year he tells of a small detachment making eighty miles in seventeen hours, with every horse starting making the jaunt in prime condition.

Comparing these rides with his Civil War experiences, in the same volume, he records a march of over ninety miles in twenty-four hours, the cavalry being accompanied by horse-artillery.

THE LITTLE THING

by L. Patrick Greene

Author of "Lines of Cleavage," "Fate's Instrument," etc.

OF COURSE you know that not so long ago, in the early Summer of 1920 to be exact, the first attempt was made to fly across Africa from Cairo to Cape Town.

You read of all the elaborate preparations made by the British engineers to make that feat possible. You know how they blazed a trail across Africa, clearing away tangled jungle-growth, leveling vast tracts of primeval forests. You may have read that at N'dola, in Northern Rhodesia, the engineers were confronted with the task of clearing the ground of hundreds of ant-hills—ant-hills averaging twenty feet in height and thirty feet in diameter—and of how this task was satisfactorily completed; that seven hundred natives, working from April to August, removed twenty-five thousand tons of ant-hills from the ground.

Then, when the announcement was made that the chain of aerodromes was complete, you read of the super-aeroplane that was to attempt the flight; of its tested and oft-tried crew. The final conquest of Africa seemed sure.

And, of course, you read that the flight failed. Failed when success was almost in sight.

That you know; that you believe. You read all about it in the newspapers.

But, if you were to be told that one Charles Towne, a sneak-thief, a card-sharper, an escaped convict, born in the year 1860 and died in 1896, was directly the cause of the failure, you would raise your eyebrows, shrug your shoulders; you would express, in your own peculiar way, your utter incredulity, your disbelief in such a foolish statement.

But read to the end and scoff no more.

WHEN the surveying-party entrusted with the erection of aerodromes, emergency landing-grounds, petrol stations and so on, came to the *kraal* of M'wanza—and the *kraal* of M'wanza is in British territory, just over the line from what was German East Africa—they were treated with cordiality by the old chief.

For the first time they experienced no difficulties in obtaining native labor. Once the requirements were made known M'wanza inducted all of his men into the service of the white Inkosi and, as M'wanza appointed himself a sort of general overseer, the work went on apace.

There was no malingering on the part of the natives, no desertions, rioting, or pilfering of supplies.

This was a matter for surprized comment on the part of the white men in charge. At other stations the slackness, the indifference, the antagonism even of the natives to the work, had been one of the most difficult obstacles the white men had to surmount; dwarfing even the obstacles of nature.

The land around M'wanza's *kraal* was singularly free from rank vegetation and tangled undergrowth, and Hewson, the engineer in charge, boasted that he would create at M'wanza the safest landing-place and aerodrome of the many which marked, amidst abysmal ignorance and savagery, the highest stage to which the white man's civilization has reached.

The aerodrome was erected. The huts which were to be the quarters of aviators sprang into being almost overnight, and work was commenced on the final leveling of the landing-ground.

There was not much to be done. There were a few scattered ant-hills which, when demolished, would serve to fill in an occasional hollow and Hewson was content to leave such matters in the hands of his subordinate while he, with his staff, moved on to the site of the next station.

When Hewson later returned for a final inspection he found that all was accomplished. The hollows were filled; the landing-ground was as level and as free from projections as a table, except——

He turned angrily on the man he had left behind in charge of the work.

"What's that mean, Platt?"

"That" was a large ant-hill which reared its distorted shape some fifteen feet into the air. It was about one hundred yards from the aerodrome and almost at the edge of the landing-field. A party of natives were grouped about its base.

"I was going to tell you about that, sir."

"I don't want you to tell me about anything," exclaimed Hewson irritably. "Tear it down."

"I can't, sir."

"What do you mean 'can't'? Have you tried blasting?"

"I haven't tried anything."

Hewson almost exploded with wrath.

"The natives won't touch it, sir," Platt continued in even tones, "and what's more, they won't let any one else. M'wanza backs 'em up."

Hewson now saw for the first time that the natives at the base of the ant-hill were armed with ugly-looking assagais.

"What's it all about, Platt?" he asked in milder tones.

"I don't know, sir. I don't speak the lingo, you know, and the interpreter says they won't tell him anything. They say he's a pig of a Barotse and has no understanding of holy things."

Hewson pondered on this a moment.

"*'Um!*" he said at length. "It must be some form of fetish worship. Come on, Platt; we'll go and see old M'wanza. We must get to the bottom of this. That hill must come down; not that it is a menace to a safe landing; it's too near the edge of the clearing, I imagine, for that, but it does spoil the look of the place."

The old chief greeted the two men, especially Hewson, who spoke the language fluently, with a great show of hospitality.

He offered them beer to drink from his own calabash; he inquired minutely into the state of their health, then, assured that all their organs were functioning properly, he waited in sphinx-like silence for the white men to state their errand.

"Thou hast been of great help to us," said Hewson suddenly. "The great white chief sends thee his thanks."

M'wanza waved his hands expressively.

"What need for thanks?" he grunted. "All this is to my honor."

"That is indeed true. The name of M'wanza has become a great power. People now speak his name in the lands across the great water. Great is his fame."

M'wanza made no reply.

"Yet there is one thing still needed, O chief."

"Sayest thou so, white man?"

"Aye. Yet it is but a little thing and I am loath to trouble thee with it."

"A little thing? Tell me then what that may be. No little thing shall stand between M'wanza and the white men, his friends."

"It is this, M'wanza. Everything is now made ready for the coming of the great 'bird' which carries many men on its back. Its house hath been built, the bushes and rocks have been removed from the ground so that it stub not its toes. But one thing remains."

"Yes, yes," said M'wanza impatiently. "Thou art overlong of speech, white man. That is not thy custom. Speak freely, that all may be made at one between us."

"It is the little matter of an ant-hill that must be removed and thou, thou hast said 'Nay.' "

M'wanza sprang angrily to his feet; his eyes blazed with wrath.

"An' call ye that 'a little thing'?" he cried.

His anger quickly passed and, resuming his squatting position beside the fire, he went on:

"The white *inkosi* must pardon the anger of an old man. But, indeed, thou has spoken of holy things, of things whereof ye lack proper understanding."

Hewson knocked the ashes out of his pipe. He refilled it, slowly and methodically, lighted it and puffed several minutes in silence before saying quietly—

"There is a story to tell, M'wanza?"

"Aye. There is a story to tell, white man, and it comes to me now that it would be well to tell thee that story. So shall it be made clear to thee that it is not lack of understanding, not a feeling of unfriendliness toward the white men, that impels me to deny thy request; that 'little thing.' And I say yet again, white man, that that ant-hill shall not be removed save ye do it by force, first shedding the blood of my young men.

"Thou art astounded. Yet, I tell thee, it is for no idle whim, for no light reason, that I dare to incur the enmity of the white men.

"But have patience with me—an old man ofttimes grows garrulous; his feet stray from the path they start out to follow —and thou shalt, mayhap, come to see eye to eye with me; to acknowledge that I commit no grievous fault.

"From thine own knowledge of things thou must piece out things that I, perhaps, have forgotten or at no time understood.

"THE beginning, *inkosi*, was threescore years ago. I was a young man then in the full pride of my strength, not old and feeble as ye see me now.

"I was returning with my *impi*—my regiment of warriors—from a raid on the lands of the Barotse. In those days there was always war between us and, indeed even now, what harm if a Barotse be found dead and the spear of one of my young men piercing his heart?

"We came to the river, yonder, intending to bathe and to decorate ourselves with flowers as is becoming to victors ere going on to the *kraal*.

"As we came near we saw a man, a white man, climb up out of the water. He was almost naked; his stature was puny and unshapely. From a cord about his neck hung a large knife and in his hands he carried a small bundle.

"We watched him, unseen, wonder in our hearts, for few of us had ever seen a white man in such a place, appearing in such a manner.

"One of my warriors, Mshlega by name, crept forward on his belly toward the white man. An assagai was in his hands, the desire to kill in his heart.

"Suddenly the white man turned and Mshlega sprang to his feet with a cry, and rushed forward.

"We expected to see the white man run and words rose hotly between us, some holding that the white man would reach the river and safety—for my people are no swimmers—ere Mshlega was upon him; others that the spear of Mshlega would first reach his heart.

"As we watched, the white man suddenly stooped low to the ground.

"Then from his lips, *inkosi*, came the roar of Silwane, the lion, at his kill. It is the truth I speak.

"Again and again came the sound that sets the blood of a man coursing hotly through the veins and from the jungle beyond the river came an answering roar, the roar of a lion answering its mate.

"Mshlega turned in his tracks and, dropping his shield and spear that he might not be impeded, fled toward the *kraal*.

"As for us others, we watched in silent amazement the man who was now coming toward us. We expected, I think, that he would take on the form of a lion. Yet, when he came nearer and we saw that he was laughing, all fear left us and we shouted to him, praying that he would bid his servant the lion to spare us.

"He made signs signifying that he could not understand our speech and then made known to us that he was weary, and greatly a-hungered.

"So we took him, *inkosi*, to the *kraal*, but first he needs must make a covering to hide somewhat of his nakedness. He pointed to the leopard-skin I wore about my shoulders. It is, as ye well know, the symbol of my rank, but I gave it to him.

"Yes. That I suffered him.

"And so he came to live among us. From whence he came we never knew. In after years when he had learned to speak our tongue, and that he did quickly, we ofttimes questioned him concerning this, but he would only reply:

" 'From the river I came. Let that suffice ye.' "

M'wanza paused a moment and drank deeply of his beer before continuing.

"But how shall I tell thee of the wonder of this man, *inkosi?* This man we called

Izwi—for of a truth he was the mouthpiece of the great ones.

"The speech of all the birds of the air and of the beasts on earth was his; aye, even of the tiny winged things, the honey-bees.

"When he crowed the hens came running to his call; the cattle in the scherm answered to his lowing. In his voice was the barking of dogs and the bleating of goats. The mournful note of the bell-bird, and the scream of the tree-hyrax came from his lips.

"And if there could be yet doubt that he was not sent to us by the spirits, there were other signs.

"He would take a stone, look ye, a pebble about the size of an egg and this, after praying aloud to the queen of the heavens, he would throw into the air, and lo! It vanished! It came not down again. 'It hath gone,' he said, 'to take my message to the great ones.'

"Again, when in the council-place—for because that he was the mouthpiece of the spirits, I had made him my chief *indunna*—his judgment was asked on some weighty matter,

" 'Wait,' he would say. 'This is a thing beyond my knowledge. Let me commune with the spirits.'

"Then would he stand for a while in silence, his hands outstretched before him. Suddenly he would make a thrust with his hands as one who would try to catch in full flight the swift honey-bird.

"Then we would see, in awed amazement, that the hand which had been empty now held a pebble; that same pebble it was, as we knew by a mark upon it, which had carried his message to the spirits at a previous time.

"This pebble, then, he would put in his mouth and swallow. Thus we knew that the words of wisdom which he then uttered were not the words of mortal man but the judgments of the great ones.

"Again. When, as sometimes happened, some among us dared to doubt the wisdom he uttered he would take his knife in his hand and cry aloud—

" 'If my words are false, O ye great ones, then let death come to me.'

"Then would he plunge the knife into his side.

"Aye, *inkosi*, close to him have I been when he did this thing, so close that by stretching out my hand I could have touched him, and saw that the knife was buried up to the hilt in his flesh.

"But his words were always true words. No blood gushed out and when he withdrew the knife again there was no wound!

"Is there any wonder then, *inkosi*, that my people waxed powerful; that my riches were second to none in the land?

"As to what manner of man he was there is only this to be told.

"He was no fighting man and the striplings of my *kraal* could outrun and outwrestle him. It was his pleasure at times to join in their games. Content was he to sit with the old men, listening to their tales.

"He was overfat from his lazy life among us and waddled somewhat in his gait. Another such man we would have derided, would have called Umglubu, the pig. But not Izwi. Ah no! He was too great a man for even me, M'wanza the chief, to deal with jestingly.

"And always there was laughter in his eyes. Only once, nay twice, did I see him angered.

"The first time was when I, thinking to honor him, sent my daughter to sit in his shadow, to become his wife.

"He brought her back to my hut, and reviled me, calling down the curse of the spirits upon me.

" 'I am a white man,' he cried. 'I am a white man.'

"Word had come to us from time to time of the coming of the white man from the land that lies to the south, even in the land of the Matabele.

" 'Some day they will come here,' said Izwi. 'And that day will be the day of my leaving ye. Yet grieve not. For thee it will be a day of rejoicing.'

" 'How can that be?' I answered. 'What cause for rejoicing an thou dwell'st no more among us?'

"But he made no further reply. Nevertheless I kept his saying in my heart.

"AYE. The white men were indeed overrunning the land. Already that tribe ye call German had taken the land which is beyond the river.

" 'Will they come here?' I asked Izwi.

" 'Nay, but men of my own race.'

"That in some measure pleased me. Evil reports had come to my ears concerning the ways of those others.

"It was in the year of the great plague—the rinderpest ye call it; that evil pestilence which slew the greater parts of our herds so that the stench of their carcasses filled the land from here to the great waters—that Izwi went from us. And this is the manner of his going.

"In the land of the Matabele a great *umlimo*, a witch-doctor, arose, proclaiming that the white men were the cause of the plague. Word had come to him, he said, from the spirits, that the day of the white men was at an end.

"And thou knowest, *inkosi*, how the Matabele arose in rebellion and the land flowed with the blood of white men. But for each man who died ten others sprang up in his place.

"Then it was that *Umlimo* sent messengers to me and to all the chiefs that dwell in the valley of the great river, begging us to 'come in' and help his people.

"He promised us great power and wealth. 'If ye come in,' he said, 'the end will come quickly.'

"And, indeed, *inkosi* he was right in that. Fifty thousand fighting men followed the spears of the chiefs of the valley. Besides many guns and much powder was promised to us by those other white men across the river should we go to the help of the Matabele.

"A great *indaba* was held—a meeting of all the chiefs of the valley, at this, my *kraal*, to determine whether we should, or should not, 'go in' with the Matabele.

"Many were in favor of so doing, I among them. Thus, I thought, would I postpone the day when Izwi must go from us.

"In the midst of the arguments I turned suddenly to Izwi.

" 'And what sayest thou, O mouthpiece of the great ones?' I cried in a loud voice.

"The babel of voices ceased instantly. Many knew of Izwi's oneness with the spirits; all had heard of him and desired to see him perform his wonders.

"He did not answer at once but stood waiting for word from the spirits. Then, when it had come to him in the manner I have already told thee, he said:

" 'That way is folly, O ye people of the valley. Even now the Matabele are fleeing before the vengeance of the white men. Beware of the evil ones who seek to ensnare thee!'

"But there were many who yet doubted. Who could stand against us? We were strong and cunning warriors. Our numbers were like the sand on the river-bed.

"Again Izwi spoke, and this time the blade of his knife gleamed in his hand.

" 'Hear me, O ye great ones,' he cried, 'and if my words are false then let death come to me.'

"He plunged the knife into his side and, withdrawing it, showed us that there was no wound; the skin was unbroken.

"A deep silence spread over the people for of a truth this wonder was too great for them.

"Then one—he was a chief from across the river—cried aloud in a mocking voice:

" 'Do not let yourselves be so easily deceived, O people of the valley. It is but a trick. Is he not one of the tribe we will go and wipe off the face of the earth? Let me but thrust my spear into him. Then, if he still lives, I will follow his counsel.'

"At this the others cried:

" 'It is well said. Suffer one of us to thrust a spear into thee, O Izwi; so shall we be brought to see things thy way.'

"Then, *inkosi,* I saw Izwi angered for the second time.

" 'Fools and pigs!' he cried. 'Do ye doubt the word of the spirits? Hear me then. I say to you that my other counsel was false. Go in then with the Matabele and drive the white men into the great waters. Wealth and honor shall be your portion.

" 'Hear me, O ye great ones,' he cried, 'and let death come to me if I now have lied.'

"Again he plunged the knife into his heart and this time the blood gushed out and with a gasp he fell to the ground.

"It was enough, *inkosi.* Of a surety this was no trick!

"The great spirits had spoken. The first counsel Izwi gave us was the true word that we heeded. We did not go in with the Matabele.

"As for Izwi, we buried him with all the honor due to a great chief and one well-beloved by the people.

"That ant-hill which ye now seek to remove marks his grave; and who are we, white man, to disturb such a man's last resting-place?"

"Ah! Who indeed," murmured Hewson.

"Wait but a little longer," continued M'waza. "This I would have ye see."

He opened a small tin box and from it took a long-bladed, long-handled knife.

"It was Izwi's," said M'waza, handing it reverently to the white man.

Hewson looked at it carefully and when Platt would have taken it he gravely handed it back to the old chief.

"This also, *inkosi*, thou shouldst see. Mayhap it will tell thee many things that are hidden from me."

He gave the white man a much-soiled linen envelope. Opening it, Hewson saw that it contained two or three newspaper-clippings.

They were crumpled and yellow with age and it was with difficulty that Hewson succeeded in even partially deciphering them.

The first told of the escape of one Charles Towne from the Prison at Dartmoor. The little else that Hewson could distinguish follows:

> — man of great cunning. Known—intimates as 'Laughing Charlie,'—goodnatured—go lucky nature. It is feared—ship for colonies—ports are —watched. May try—in Music Halls— A— prestidigitator—mimic.

The other clippings seemed to be accounts of concerts and the following is worth noting:

> Towne 'greatly pleased—with a few sleight-of-hand tricks. —proved that— of-hand deceives the eye. As an encore—mimicked the cries of animals. His—of a lion—quite terrifying.

"WHAT was it all about, sir?" asked Platt as they walked slowly back to the camp, "and why does M'wanza treasure those old newspaper-clippings and the trick dagger?"

"Ah! You noticed that, did you? I thought perhaps you would. That's why I wouldn't let you take it in your hands. I was afraid you'd push up the catch and let the blade vanish up the handle. I didn't want to destroy the old chap's faith."

"Did you get any satisfaction about the ant-hill?"

"It's going to stand and I'm wondering if we dare to erect a flag-pole near it. But I'll tell you about that, and the rest tonight when the others are here."

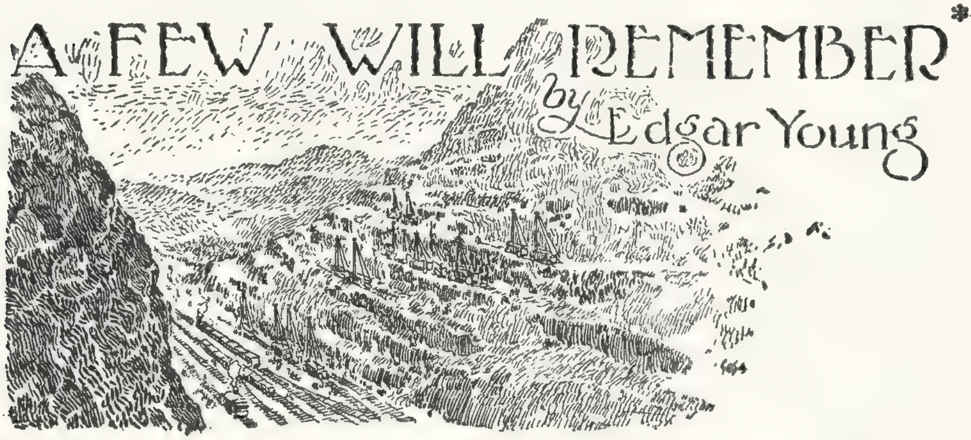
That is all save this paragraph which appeared in English papers dated April, 1920.

It was headed, "THE LITTLE THING," and reads:

> By the irony of Fate the first attempt to fly from Cairo to Cape Town was prevented by an ant-hill.
>
> On leaving M'wanza, Captain —— was unable to lift the aeroplane quickly enough to avoid a large ant-hill standing at the edge of the landing-ground.
>
> The tip of the plane hit the mound and the plane came with a crash to the ground.
>
> None of the crew was hurt, but the machine was completely wrecked and the flight had to be abandoned.

A FEW WILL REMEMBER*

by Edgar Young



Author of "The Sun-God Trail," "The Master Plotter," etc.

I STOOD on the deck of a steamer making its way through Culebra Cut. Everything was changed. Nothing was the same. A second growth of jungle had sprung up. Grass was growing from the water-line to the hilltops. Herds of acclimatized Colombian cattle were grazing on the sides of Culebra.

Passengers lounged in deck-chairs idly scanning what they supposed were natural slopes of the country. A few stood at the rails chatting good-naturedly. Already they were beginning to wonder what would be of interest at the ports of the West Coast. Yet we were passing through Culebra the Cut, the nine-mile gash through a chain of mountains, the man-made cañon where we had battered and battered and dug and dug to weld two oceans into one. Culebra, trier of souls, red with the blood of men!

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* *This is an Off-the-Trail Story. See first contents page.*

They are pasturing cattle on the sides of Culebra. It would have been scant picking eight years ago. Then the walls were bare and a horde of men swarmed sides and bottom of the big cut. I had to shut my eyes before I could see it as it was then. The roaring steam-shovels, belching smoke and steam, the racing locomotives dragging long trains of lidgerwoods heaped high with red and blue clay, the maze of tracks on every spare foot of space along the floor and along the sides of the cut, the chugging Star-drills making holes for the noon-day bombardment, the channelers thumping up and down their short runways, the locomotive cranes with greedy clam-shell or orange-peel buckets biting into the earth, the swinging stiff-legs, the screaming dinkys, the long-boomed track-shifters, the swarming gangs of white and yellow and black men from all countries on the earth's face.

An army of men had fought Culebra. Day by day they had gone out to give battle. And day by day Culebra gave answer. The walls caved in and great cracks in the earth extended back into the hills for miles, the bottom belched up from the weight of earth on the sides, overturning steam-shovels and disrupting tracks; slides came down. Cucuracha dropped four million yards into the cut in one day over and above her regular schedule. And she was but one of many. An unknown bed of mineral was dug into, which took fire at exposure to the air and smoldered like a volcano for weeks until it was dug up bodily and hauled from the cut.

And Culebra killed and maimed and crippled many men. One day eighty were buried under a bank that caved in. Another day fifty were killed in a premature explosion. She took legs and arms, feet, hands and would have taken more lives and maimed more men had it not been for the best surgeons in the world who averaged more than thirty operations a day for months at a stretch in the operating ward at Ancon. Culebra—snake as your name implies; monster!

Men lost their grip of things and went to hell fighting against Culebra Cut. Men turned tail and fled, spreading the word that it could not be done. Men were made into gamblers, liars, thieves and murderers on account of Culebra Cut. It tried their souls. It gave them tests they never would have had to meet otherwise.

We were passing along the side of Gold Hill. How meaningless to the well-mannered folk who lounged the deck. Gold Hill! Gold Hill, the defiant! Gold Hill, the inscrutable! Gold Hill, the unconquerable! Gold Hill, highest peak of the mountain-chain!

Here had been Culebra's fort. Here she had let loose roaring avalanches of mud and stone. Here she had put more dirt in the canal in a day than we could dig out in a year. Here she had bitten deep into the ranks of the Yankee men, the sweating blacks, the allied horde that swarmed to give battle to this unchained giant and devil, Gold Hill.

We were floating over the exact spot where Jim Hall's shovel had worked the day before Gamboa dike was blown up and the water turned in. Jim Hall! I could have screamed it to my fellow passengers. Jim Hall's shovel made her last cut right back there. Jim Hall's shovel, the battered old Bucyrus. They meant much to me. And Jim Hall's heart, the heart of an overalls-clad private in the ranks. Of this big heart I shall have more to say.

I couldn't say just how long this shovel-runner had been on the Zone when I first arrived. That he had been there a long time I knew from the gaunt look of his hollow face, the sag of his figure, the melancholy stare of his pale blue eyes. There wasn't an ounce of strength visible in his face. His chin sloped abruptly, his sparse gray mustache drooped downward over a sagging lower lip. He was plainly a man who had missed too many boats back to the U. S. A. And this was in 1907.

I KNEW from the first time I laid eyes on him that he was hard hit by the sun. I wouldn't have given him a month to remain. Bigger, stronger, healthier men were going down and out by dozens. Shut off from the breeze down there under Gold Hill it was hot. One day at noon down there it registered one hundred and twenty-eight. And at Colon it was only ninety-four. That was in the shade. The Lord Himself only knows how hot it was on the same day on the deck of a Bucyrus with a piece of corrugated iron overhead and a red-hot boiler close beside. They packed them out that day on stretchers and they threw water on them where they staggered in circles and fell.

Other days the water poured from the sky. One year the record was a hundred and forty-four inches. And it only rained part of the time. It did not come down in drops nor sheets. It came down by pailsful, downpours, avalanches of water hurled from the heavens with force enough to knock a man to his knees at times.

I didn't stick around very long myself the first time. I did a hitch of about a year. It wasn't nearly so healthy on the Zone then as it is now. Nor it wasn't so tame either. Colon was a mud-hole with shacks standing about through it on stilts. They had no sewerage. Underneath the houses alligators and reptiles of all sizes and shapes squirmed through the black mud by day and night.

They hadn't got the Zone very well sanitated then, either. The impossible was not then an accomplished fact. Mosquitoes flew in clouds. There were gnats, bats, bugs, insects, great poisonous ants, snakes, lice—hell's brood to bite and sting—blood-sucking vampires and the sun.

This last was the worst. Not the heat but the hidden rays, the ultra-violet, the thing that takes hold of a man's soul, that clutches and burns up the nerves' very protoplasm, that causes men to spring up from deep slumber and scream with horror at a noise as slight as the dropping of a pin. This I know and from no man's hearsay do I know it.

I craned Jim Hall's shovel in 1907. Perched high on the side of the throbbing boom, underneath a piece of corrugated iron, butterfly throttle in left hand, dumping rope in right, *swoop*, the big five-yard dipper bit into the slate-hard clay. *Chow; chow! Chuff; chuff; chuff!* A shove on the butterfly, *chuck-a-chuck-chuck!* out go the sticks, a yank on the dumping rope, a thundering of earth on the steel bottom of the lidgerwood; *clang* goes the dipper door back into place, snap goes the latch and wildly we swing back for another trip. Five yards at a trip and seconds measured the interval between. Hundreds of shovels were beating the world's record for moving earth. And Jim Hall was the champion runner of the C. Z.

Steady-eyed, white-faced, grim-jawed, silent, I've seen him stand there for a full eight-hours' shift, without one minute's rest, taking every ounce of power out of the old Bucyrus, figuring the swing of the boom, studying the moves forward between trains of empty cars, calculating to the exact fraction of an inch just where we would drop the dipper, watching me and working with me until he and I, shovel, dipper, boom and engines, were just one huge machine, a thing of intelligence and power. There is skill in labor, and art—yes, much art.

I stood it a year and I quit. I wanted to live. Two cranemen ahead of me had drunk themselves to death on Balboa rum to keep themselves keyed to the highest pitch. The man ahead of them placed a .44 in his mouth and blew the top of his head off one night in the quarters at Empire. He hadn't been able to sleep for a week. Jim Hall had killed them. He had worked them to death. I know that he worked them to death for he came within an inch of working me to death. And I have a paper signed and sealed saying that I was one of the best cranemen in the Zone. I got this because Jim Hall worked me so hard I made a record. No credit is due me. No egotism is mixed up in this.

All four of us were bigger, stronger men than Jim Hall. I weighed two hundred and fourteen pounds. He weighed about a hundred and forty-five. The difference was that he was obsessed. I read his mind, read his soul as we worked there together day after day. It was our two brains that ran the big machine. Working together, sweating, scheming, amidst the terrific roaring of his engines and mine, the clatter, the clanging, the throbbing that shook us like rats in the teeth of a dog, our brains welded together and I knew his thoughts as he did mine.

When he cursed Gold Hill that crept down, down, down into the cut and pointed his shovel into the toe of the slide and it gained and pushed us back day by day, week by week, month by month, I raved at it with hysterical oaths.

Yet although I hated Gold Hill and fought it with bitter heart, one Monday morning I quit and swung down from the boom with giddy head. I staggered and fell and two of our blacks got hold of me and steadied me across the tracks and on to the path leading up the hill to Culebra village. And I heard Jim Hall cursing Gold Hill as I went away. He was talking to it as to a thing alive.

"You got him. You beat him. You licked him. But you can't get me. —— you, you can't get me."

I had one greasy glove on. I remember looking at it curiously. And I remember those exact words. And I remember the half-insane, half-hysterical, half-womanly laugh that followed his remarks.

They say that Jim Hall cried next week when his name stood third on the list in the *Zone Record*, while he was breaking in another man in my place. The next week he was second. It was three weeks before he was back to his place at the head of the list.

AND two years later I drifted back. I had come lengthwise up the Andes and the West Coast by boat and trail, working and tramping. I was strong as an ox. I caught a train of empty lidgerwoods coming off the dump at Balboa and rode them back into the Cut. I peered off as we began to pass the shovels.

There were many new faces at the throttles at both shovel and boom-engines. Two years before I had known 'most all of them, at least by sight. Now I didn't recognize very many of them. Two years had thinned their ranks. Some had gone back to the States and the flesh of others mingled with the red clay of Monkey Hill on the outskirts of Colon. Some raved in the madhouse at Ancon.

The whistles blew for quitting-time as we drifted on to a spotting-track on the toe of Gold Hill. Men began to swarm toward the waiting labor trains. It was when I had swung down and was looking at the battered fleet of shovels that I saw the familiar old Bucyrus; the 84. Jim Hall stumbled down and started half-groping his way toward a labor train. Yes, he was there yet. He hadn't missed a day since I had been gone. I seized him by the arm and helped him against his protests across the tracks and into a car. On a rough board-seat I sank down beside him.

I was brutally frank. I told him he was all in, that he had missed too many boats. I told him he had done his part, more than his part. I told him he would be a dead man within a month. It was only when he turned and looked into my eyes that I saw the mental flint, the mental cold steel, the indomitable will that held this man to his task after his body had broken down. He smiled wanly and shook his head.

"We just got to keep gnawing away as the slides come down. Finally the walls will brace and stay back when they get adjusted. I wish you'd come back and crane for me. I've learned a few tricks I didn't know. I can clip a few seconds that I couldn't clip before."

His voice dropped to a hoarse confidential whisper.

"I'm setting a cruel pace for the shovels. I've raised my own record twenty-five per cent."

That was in 1909. I did not go to work as steam-shovel craneman. I am no hog. I had had enough. I worked as engineer of a locomotive crane. I ran a stiff-leg. I drove a gang of Gallego Spaniards. I ran a relay-pump and an electric hoist. I was telegraph operator and towerman at most of the stations on the P. R. R. But I always found time to drift over into the Cut and stand and gaze at the snorting steam-shovels tearing into the toes of the huge slides; whole mountainsides crawling like glaciers down the sides of the Cut.

And I always looked for and I always saw Jim Hall. But very seldom he glanced off and saw me. And week after week, month after month, I scanned the *Canal Zone Record* to see if his name headed the list. And each week the total yardage he had handled was a trifle greater than the week before.

It was early in 1913 that we on the P. R. R. began to get real busy. The waters of Lake Gatun were rising rapidly. They were creeping foot by foot up the face of the doors of Gatun upper locks. Towns were being moved. The city of Gorgona, a place that sheltered some eight thousand souls, was cut into sections and loaded bodily on cars and moved. The huge Gorgona shops, with machinery that required special cars in many instances to stand the weight, were loaded and taken away. Matachin, Frijoles, Lion Hill, Tiger Hill, all the old and all the new camps in the lake-basin had to come out and we on the P. R. R. had to work swift and fast to get them out in time. The rising tide was soon to cover a hundred and seventy square miles. Our old line was already torn up and removed and we were skirting the lake on the new location.

Like clockwork we worked but like clockwork with pendulum removed, running wild, working at top speed to beat the rising water. At last the water poured over the spillway at Gatun dam. The lake was full. It stood within a foot of the top of the big coffer dam at Gamboa. Only Culebra Cut delayed turning the water through. Men fumed and cursed and lost heart. Weeks passed, months; it was in the Fall that we began to get rumors that the shovels in the Cut were working on the bottom of the proposed canal. Then quickly came the report that the Cut was ready for the water to be turned through. The tracks were being torn up and the machinery moved out. A few shovels were left until the very last, nibbling off the very tip-ends of the slides.

IT WAS a Sunday morning late in the Fall. Every man who was not actually working at the time gathered along the Cut to see the water go through. Right well I remember the bottom of the Cut that morning, three hundred feet wide and flat with a deep drainage-ditch in the exact center. And right well I remember the gaping Cut itself. A yawning gash nine miles long and over six hundred feet deep at Gold Hill, a great scar into the very vitals of Nature.

Boom! Boom! Boom-boom! Boom-boom-boom! came the muffled reports of the dynamite bombs that had been placed along the face of Gamboa dike. The water shot upward in a foaming cataract, visible for miles. Then came the coffee-colored flood raging through the Cut.

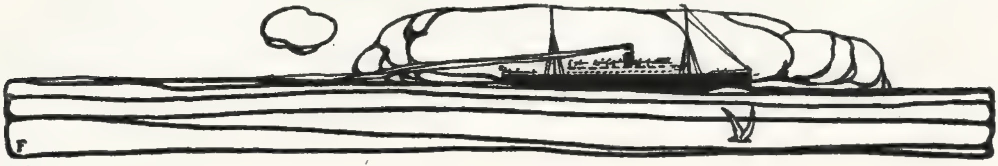
Cheer on cheer. Men were screaming—mad with joy. Their shouts welded together in a mighty roar that echoed above the roar of water tearing through the Cut. Their cries ran the full length of Culebra and back again many times. This was the supreme climax of the work that cost the U. S. A. four hundred million. This was the realization of dreams since Balboa first stood on Darien's peak and glimpsed both Atlantic and Pacific. This was the surrender of Culebra, breaker of hearts, killer of men.

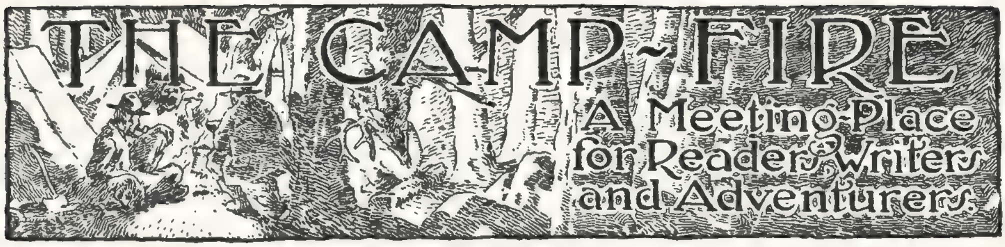
The great sirens on the power-houses were booming as hysterical men yank, yank, yanked on the ropes until arms grew numb and they tied them down to blow until the steam ebbed from the mighty boilers. Ships of all nations lying in the harbors of Colon and Panama were giving tongue to their joy in huge blasts, tugs in the channels, five hundred locomotives along the P. R. R., every industrial plant in Colon and Panama, pleasure-launches, everything that boasted a whistle was lending volume to the roar that rose in a crescendo to the very heavens and echoed back again and again and again. It was only when we had grown weak from exhaustion that we desisted.

And turning, we clambered along the sides of the Cut toward the various towns where we belonged. It was then that I suddenly came upon the old Bucyrus, the 84. She was muddy as a hog. Her smokestack had been knocked off and lost. Her dipper had been run out and taken down and was lashed to her deck with twists of cable. In place of the chain on her drums I noted a great reel of wire cable. She had been the last shovel to work in the Cut.

She had finished the job and had wound herself up out of the Cut at an angle of forty-five degrees on her own power with men placing short lengths of track ahead of her. She was within a rail's length of the main line of the P. R. R. and could be spurred in at any minute.

A few rods farther along I came upon Jim Hall sitting upon a boulder, resting. His chin was in his hands and he was staring down into the Cut with a look of serene satisfaction upon his emaciated face. I clapped him upon the back, shouting how grand it was that we had won. He did not move and I stopped, frozen by the fact which just then came to me like a shock. Jim Hall was stone-dead.





THE CAMP-FIRE
A Meeting-Place for Readers Writers and Adventurers

IT'S a safe bet that some of you can and will furnish this comrade with the words he wants:

Anaconda, Montana.

Camp-Fire: Please excuse me for bothering you, but owing to the fact that I don't know of any one else who might be able to give me the information I want, I am taking the liberty to do so.

Some time ago I came across a quotation from a song which I believe is called, "The Cowboy's Lament." The quotation is:

She's a Lulu, she's a daisy,
She's my little honey-bee,
And there's a puncher goin' to glory
If he don't let my Lulu be.

I may be wrong as to the exact wording, but I think it is near enough correct to enable any one familiar with the piece to recognize it. I would appreciate it very much if you could supply me with the rest of the song.—JOE SCHMIDT.

IF ONLY school and college text-books would get the habit of presenting history as if it were a record of human endeavor and human progress instead of a learned tabulation of dates and of facts stripped of nearly everything that could make them real and living! If only they would come considerably closer to portraying things as they really were instead of making them partisan or sectional! The history of our young country is a wonder story and human, human, human all the way through. As many of you have already said, one reason we like Hugh Pendexter's stories is that they make our history alive to us, so that, while enjoying a good fiction story, we get a picture and an understanding that school-books never gave us. Mr. Pendexter might be called a translator of history into human terms.

Concerning the history used in his complete novel in this issue, he gives us the following:

During 1780 some three hundred Kentucky boats passed down the Ohio, but until 1787 the travel was confined to the Kentucky lands. By the Northwest Ordinance, passed in 1787, what now comprises the States of Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio was opened to the whites. Public interest in the new lands was national. In 1788 the first great western migration got under way. In the Autumn of 1788 thousands were passing down the Ohio and hundreds of thousands were on their way or preparing for the venture. Cincinnati and Marietta were founded in this year, the former being first named Losantiville, and from the start destined to be the most important settlement on the river.

THIS mighty migration, affecting a whole people, appealed to me and I have tried to give some idea of it in "The Floating Frontier." The general ignorance of the immigrants concerning the new country they were entering is not, I believe, exaggerated. Among the works consulted for the various phases of the migration are, Ebenezer Denny's "Military Journal;" "Settlements of Illinois" (Boggess); "Ohio, Its History and Antiquities" (Henry Howe); "Frontier Defenses of the Upper Ohio" (Thwaites); "History of Travel in America" (Dunbar); "Early Western Travels" (edited by Thwaites); Wither's "Chronicles of Border Warfare in Northwest Virginia"; "Ohio Valley in Colonial Days" (Farnow); "Explorations in the Mississippi Basin" (Justin Winsor) and, of course, standard histories.

Of the river-pirates Dunbar in substance says (note, p. 300, vol. I) that "the whole subject of brigandage on the river in early days is shrouded in mystery." He doubts if it existed to the extent believed by travelers of the time and later pictured in legends. As to bibliography on the subject he says, "Almost the only book dealing exclusively with the question is the fantastic tale entitled 'Mike Fink; A Legend of the Ohio,' by Emerson Bennett."

However, the fact remains the pirates were there and robbed and killed without much hindrance until the Kentucky militia fought a pitched battle with them, killing many and dispersing the rest. Harpe (frequently spelled Harp in scattered references to him), Mason, and Corkendale escaped and ended their careers as told in the last chapter of my story. It was awkward to lug it in, but I deemed it necessary, as some would read the story without reading these notes; and every normal reader demands that retribution shall overtake the villain, else the Law of Compensation has failed to function.

THE description of Harpe's tavern is taken from "Settlements in Edwards County," by Geo. Flower. A traveler was suspicious of the place, found his horse had been "string cress'd," teeth "greased," etc. He feared for his life, but fell in with other travelers and escaped without a fight. No mention is made in this reference to Harpe's (spelled Harp) being connected with the Cave-in-Rock gang. For fiction purposes I have placed Harpe's tavern on the Kentucky side and near Limestone. Harpe's description of being compelled to cook food for the

Shawnees is suggested by Denny's diary for Jan. 14, 1786, wherein he mentions that the commissioners (sent down river to arrange a general treaty) foolishly thought to do the Indians honor by having the soldiers perform what the warriors believed to be degrading tasks—squaw work.

THE scout patrol between Limestone and the mouth of the Big Sandy, as planned by my hero, became a fact in the Spring of 1792.

The "Pleasant Ohio," as sung by the immigrants, may be an anachronism, as in Howe's work, cited above, it is stated this was a very popular ballad, in the Bay State in 1804. As there is nothing to show it was not sung much earlier than the year given, and as many Massachusetts people were on the Ohio from 1788 on, I have taken the liberty to use it as typing the enthusiasm and optimism of the people.

The melodramatic bringing in of the "The Road to Hell" is not imagination, as such an inscription was found cut in a beech at the mouth of a valley leading to the old town of Chillicothe. Howe locates the tree in Hocking County.

I have moved it farther west and close to Green County. In several old journals and diaries I find the people commonly spoke of being "well forted" etc., and I have allowed one of my characters to use the term. Bluejacket, Buckongahelas, and the Grenadier Squaw, are presented as the various authorities picture them. Summers' hidden cabin was suggested by Howe's mention of a settler, who remained undiscovered in the Indian country until he took a man to live with him. This man thoughtlessly blazed some trees to the mouth of the valley. The scenes at Fort Finney on the Great Miami are parallel to what Denny gives in his "Military Journal." Michael Lacassagne was all that I have tried to portray.

JACOB DRENNON, mentioned early in the story, was shot by an Indian while descending the Ohio. Knowing he was mortally wounded he threw himself into the river to save his scalp.

I have on my desk an excellent picture of Cave-in-Rock, made from a drawing by Carl Bodmer, an American painter some eighty-five years back. It is reproduced in Dunbar's work and gives an excellent idea of the cave and the wooded island below. I am indebted to Dunbar for my descriptions of the rendezvous, Old Shawneetown, and the relations of one to the other.—HUGH PENDEXTER.

MAY this comrade have his desire. I wish that I had drawn his letter from our cache long ago—that I had made a special point of printing it as soon as I could get it into type. I don't know why I didn't. And it was written in December, 1919.

Yonkers, New York.

For a couple of years or more I have been longing to horn in on the goodfellowship of the Camp-Fire. The only previous restraint being an indisposition to apparently blow my own bugle a bit too loudly. But you know how it is—I am not an author and I had my doubts about being able to interest some of you master-travelers around the reminiscent flame. Oh, yes, I have squatted with you, too, many and many a night and in some peculiar places. Sometimes in a forecastle, sometimes a Spiggoty hotel, for a while the watch-room in a light-house, for a long time it was in tents and barracks when I wore O. D.'s and lately when I went Down East for bluefish.

WHEN I was at sea—the Ward line, the Furness line (British) and several windjammers—I always stocked up with *Adventures*—back numbers, recent numbers, some with pages out, dog-eared and occasionally a tarry finger-smudge or two on the pages, here and there.

The Camp-Fire and its members were my companions in a verminous cell in the jail at Vera Cruz, when I was a reluctant guest one night for a so-called disturbance of the peace. Now I sit in my room at home, for I am in poor health as a result of too much army, and I can see the straight blue horizen and hear the wind howl through the rigging and wonder when those happy days will return when there will be moments in which I shall live years.

If this is printed, some *compadre* in some far-off place will read this and I hope he will wish I were there, too, and believe that if I were I would be game for anything. Maybe, months from hence, somebody in Singapore will read this. That's my favorite city.

Good luck to all of you, readers, writers, wanderers and stay at-homes. I've got both anchors out, plenty of scope and a good holding bottom, but my turn will come again soon and if I don't see the lee rail under again, I miss my guess.—JOHN O. OLIVER.

ROOM for an Australian comrade. He is certainly "admitted to our comradesship" for the simple reason that he has it himself. Though, as you know, any one belongs who wishes to, for he wouldn't wish to unless he liked the same kind of things we do.

Dawes Point, Sydney, New South Wales.

Whilst reading up a back issue of our magazine, I was interested in a treatise on the poisonous snakes of America. I hail from the state of Victoria, Australia, and I thought it might be of interest to some of the Camp-Fire members to hear something of the snakes we have over here in Vic. I hope this will also serve to admit me to the comradeship of the Camp-Fire.

I am telling you only what I know of them from personal experience, gained while living in the "Bush."

FIRST and foremost I think the snake most to be feared is the Tiger Snake. This specimen grows to the length of from four to five feet. It is a light brown in color, with dark brown bands across the back and neck, and an earthy colored abdomen. The head, instead of being spade-shaped, tapers off from the body to a blunt nose. During excitement it puffs out its neck in much the same way as does the cobra of India. This species is to be feared most, because it will attack with ferocity anything in its path—even *going out of its way* to attack. It is to be found generally in the northeast of the state.

THE next one to keep a good lookout for is the "Black Snake." This one attains the length sometimes of six feet. In color it is a glossy black, with a vivid red underpart. A great lover of water, it is to be found mostly in the vicinity of the log-strewn creeks and waterholes. The head is the same shape as the "Tiger Snake," as indeed all the others. It is to be found all over Victoria.

The Brown Snake grows to about the same length as the Black Snake. Its color ranges from a light grayish to an earthy brown. It differs from the others insomuch as it lays eggs, whereas the other species give birth to their young. Its eggs are laid beside a log or tuft of grass, where the sun can hatch them. The parents are always to be found near their eggs.

THE Copperhead Snake, usually about four feet in length, is to be found south of the Dividing Range. Its body is a dark brown, with darker colored splotches along its back, the neck and head being copper-colored.

The Death Adder is perhaps the deadliest, but fortunately it is the most scarce. It seldom grows more than two and a half feet long. The tail ends in a hard spine about an inch and a half long. Many people believe the spine is a poisonous sting, but this is a fallacy. Its color is a dark brown.

ALL these species are deadly in the extreme, the bite resulting in death if not immediately attended to. Their food consists mostly of small birds, rabbits, frogs and eggs. The black and brown species usually yield to the temptation of a saucer of milk, and so can be quickly killed.

OUR largest snake is the Carpet Snake, but it is non-venomous. I have come across specimens eight to ten feet long and I believe that in the tropical part of Australia they reach the length of fourteen-odd feet. This gentleman devours all the poultry he can stow away, if the owner is not on the lookout.

OF OUR reptiles the one mostly to be met with is the Goanna. It is, I believe, a small species of the Monitor family. A great tree climber, it is an adept at disguising itself as the limb of the tree it is on, and so trapping many unwary birds. On rare occasions you may chance to see one as long as six feet. The back is a dark slate color, while the abdomen is a yellow crossed with black bars. It is very fond of rabbits and eggs and so often proves a great pest near a poultry yard. Like all our lizards it is non-venomous.

The Jew Lizard or Frill-neck Lizard is to be found in all parts of the state in the Summer. Its skin is the dark color of mud and its length is about one foot. It gets its name from its habit, when disturbed, of raising a spikey looking frill of skin round its neck, extending its mouth to the widest extent and flattening out its body with the skin forming a row of spikes right around the sides. This unfortunate lizard used to form a kind of "sport" for the older boys in the country schools. When caught by the tail he is unable to bend his back sufficiently to reach the hand, and so of course it was a perfectly safe method of scaring the girls. Very ungentlemanly, certainly. But believe me, when he does get a grip of anything he is a veritable bulldog.

I MUST mention one more of the lizards before I close. This one is known as the Droptail Lizard. It grows six to eight inches long and is almost black in color. Its peculiarity is that, when caught by its tail, it scuttles off and leaves the tail wriggling in your hand. The tail is of a uniform thickness for about an inch from the base, and where this thickness ends there seems to be some arrangement for seemingly unhinging its tail. I think the nerves and muscles must contract to stop up the blood vessels, as no blood appears. The old-timer will tell you that it will try to come back at night, and if the tail is still there, it will join it on again. I've tried them, though, in boxes, often, and I've never known them to do this.

Hoping that this may prove of interest to some Camp-Fire readers, I offer you all the best of good wishes.—ALLAN J. CLARKE.

CAMP-FIRE is much indebted to Comrade Harry H. Hinde for the following letter, written in 1773, which is of particular interest in connection not only with the Hugh Pendexter story he mentions but also with "The Floating Frontier" in this issue. I think I am safe in saying that this is the first time George Washington has talked at our Camp-Fire.

In the copy Mr. Hinde sent us, all the proper names are either underscored or in capitals. I've left the paragraphing as it was, and you'll admit they are some paragraphs. Knowing nothing about it, I supplied the "o" in "Redstone," for the scholarly reason that it produced a perfectly normal looking word and it seemed that without the "o" there wasn't anything you could exactly get your hands on. Mr. Hinde left a blank between the "t" and the "n," doubtless carefully following the copy, but I figured you and he both would forgive me if I took a chance instead of waiting for letters to come 6,000 miles.

George Washington's letter gives a wonderfully vivid impression of conditions in those days and I think you'll be as interested in it as I was.

La Jolla, California.

Odd, how things happen! Last night while visiting with a friend, Gunner P——, of the U. S. Marine Corps, at the Rifle Range Camp, near La Jolla, California, he asked: "Do curios interest you?" On receiving an affirmative reply, he dragged a trunk from under his bunk and began to unload his treasures, of which there were many, collected from all over the world.

The last, and one most prized by him, was a copy of *The Maryland and Baltimore Journal, The Advertiser*, dated Friday, August 20, 1773. This copy was secured in China by a man of the U. S. Marine Corps, taken to the Philippines and there purchased by my friend, Gunner P——.

That which most interested me was an article therein written from "Mount Vernon in Virginia, July 15, 1773," and signed by "George Washington." Thinking that this authentic report regarding the early settlement of Ohio, and the distribution of the lands at the time stated, would be of much interest to those who are reading the story in *Adventure*, written by our good comrade Hugh Pendexter, entitled "A Scout for Virginia," I am inclosing a copy of the article for the readers of Camp-Fire.—HARRY H. HINDE, GY. SGT., U. S. M. C. R.

"Mount Vernon in Virginia, July 15, 1773.

"THE subscriber having obtained Patents for upwards of TWENTY THOUSAND Acres of LAND on the Ohio and Great Kanhawa (Ten Thousand of which are situated on the banks of the first-mentioned river, between the mouths of the two Kanhawas, and the remainder on the Great Kanhawa, or New River, from the mouth, or near it, upward, in one continued survey) proposes to divide the same into any sized tenements that may be desired, and lease them upon moderate terms, allowing a reasonable number of years' rent free, provided, within the space of two years from next October, three acres for every fifty contained in each lot, and proportionately for a lesser quantity, shall be cleared, fenced, and tilled; and that, by or before the time limited for the commencement of the first rent, five acres for every hundred, and proportionately, as above, shall be enclosed and laid down in good grass for meadow; and moreover, that at least fifty good fruit trees for every like quantity of land shall be planted on the premises. Any persons inclined to settle on these lands may be more fully informed of the terms by applying to the subscriber, near Alexandria, or in his absence, to Mr. Lund Washington; and would do well in communicating their intentions before the 1st of October next, in order that a sufficient number of lots may be laid off to answer the demand.

"AS THESE lands are amoung the first which have been surveyed in the part of the country they lie in, it is almost needless to premise that none can exceed them in luxuriance of soil, or convenience of situation, all of them lying upon the banks either of the Ohio or Kanhawa, and abounding with fine fish and wild fowl of various kinds, as also in most excellent meadows, many of which (by the bountiful hand of nature) are, in their present state, almost fit for the scythe. From every part of these lands water carriage is now had to Port Pitt, by an easy communication; and from Fort Pitt, up the Monongahela, to Redstone, vessels of convenient burthen, may and do pass continually; from whence, by means of Cheat River, and other navigable branches of the Monongahela, it is thought the portage to Potowmack may, and will, be reduced within the compass of a few miles, to the great ease and convenience of the settlers in transporting the produce of their lands to market. To which may be added, that as patents have now actually passed the seals of the several tracts here offered to be leased, settlers on them may cultivate and enjoy the lands in peace and safety, notwithstanding the unsettled counsels respecting a new colony on the Ohio; and as no right money is to be paid for these lands, and quitrent of two shillings sterling a hundred, demandable some years hence only, it is highly presumable that they will always be held upon a more desirable footing than where both these are laid on with a very heavy hand. And it may not be amiss further to observe, that if the scheme for establishing a new government on the Ohio, in the manner talked of, should ever be affected, these must be amoung the most valuable lands in it, not only on account of the goodness of soil, and the other advantages above enumerated, but from their contiguity to the seat of government, which more than probable will be fixed at the mouth of the Great Kanhawa.

GEORGE WASHINGTON."

AS EXPLAINED at our last Camp-Fire, The John C. Winston Company of Philadelphia has kindly given us permission to quote from "The Life of Colonel David Crockett," by Edward S. Ellis, concerning Colonel Bowie and his brother. The idea was suggested in a letter from one of you and the first part of the quotation appeared in our last issue. The remainder follows:

"ABOUT 1817 or 1818 there were imported into Georgia by certain parties a number of African negroes. They were discovered and taken possession of by the State authorities and brought to the seat of government, Milledgeville, and by some process of pretended law were sold into slavery to the number of fifty or sixty. These were carried away and retained by the purchasers when the sale was arrested. The remaining sixty or seventy were retained in the custody of the officers of the State. There appeared a claimant by the name of Madraza, from Havana, for these slaves. The slave trade then was legitimate in all the Spanish-American possessions. It was proven that John Madraza, of Havana, was the owner of the ship, and the slaves captured in Georgia were all that had been saved from the wreck, which had occurred on the coast of Florida; that they had been taken possession of by parties who had no interest in the ship or slaves, and secretly carried into Georgia. The suit before the court was to recover the money for the slaves sold and those remaining in the hands of the State officers. Madraza appeared with an interpreter, as he could only speak Spanish. At the final trial, proof of the most unquestionable character was produced to establish the identity of Madraza, and that he was a resident merchant of Havana and the owner of the ship and cargo. A recovery was had of the money and the negroes, all of which was paid and delivered to Madraza.

"The prime mover and he who had furnished the money to buy and ship these negroes resided in New Orleans. The negroes were purchased in Cuba from a regular trader and shipped to Apalachicola, and sent up to the agency of the Creek Indians, where they were captured. The New Orleans owner knew Rezin P. Bowie, and to him communicated the condition of things and asked his aid. 'It is easy enough,' said Bowie; 'establish a house in Havana, let it claim the negroes, let the ship be lost and the negroes stolen and carried into Georgia, without the consent of the owners.' It was all left to Bowie, who was to be amply compensated if successful. He established the house, was himself Madraza, furnished the proof and succeeded, but was never compensated.

"FOR some years the Bowies were planters in the parish of Lafourche and Terrebonne. This interest was under the charge of Rezin P. Bowie. James was only an occasional visitor. Most of his time was spent in Texas, whose independence he was scheming to accomplish, in connection with Austin, Houston, Lamar, Fannin, Travis, and some others. He had implicit faith in the wisdom and abilities of his brother. To obtain his counsel he made sometimes a hasty visit to him. The care of his family and plantations kept Rezin P. Bowie from active personal participation in this great enterprise. He frequently complained of the imprudent impetuosity of his brother. He said: 'James is too impatient to wait for events; he will hurry them before matters are ripe for action.' He remarked in my presence: 'Sam Houston is the master-spirit in this movement. He is a great and prudent man, despite his vanity and buffoonery. Lamar is full of genius and is chivalrously brave, and is truly a noble spirit, but is not practical. Fannin and Travis are enterprising and brave, but not calculated to plan or to lead in a desperate fight. So is Lamar; and if there is wisdom enough in these men to follow the counsels of Houston and Austin, their success is certain.'

"JAMES BOWIE was among the first to take up arms in the war for Texas independence. He resisted the counsels of Austin and Houston, and following the impulse of his nature, with Crockett, Travis and Fannin, who were all equally as impulsive and ardent, with an insufficient force, despising their enemy, they precipitated a conflict with vastly superior numbers, and when their own small force was divided—a portion under Fannin at Goliad, a part of San Antonio—both these divisions of their little army were attacked and destroyed. The body of Bowie was found in the Alamo, with twenty dead Mexicans lying around him, and of his whole command only two were saved.

"THE death of James Bowie was acutely felt by his brother. From that until his death which soon followed, he brooded over his loss, lost much of his vitality and all that disposition to rove in search of adventure. He had sold his plantation and removed to a small farm on the Mississippi, in the parish of Iberville. His two daughters, his only living children, were growing up to womanhood, were being educated, and he devoted much of his time to them. They were sprightly, and possessed many of the traits prominent in his own character. They were, like him, fond of rough sports and out-of-door amusements. They loved a gun and pistol and excelled in their use. Both of them were expert marksmen, both rode gracefully on horseback. The elder of the two, I think, was the most graceful rider I ever saw, man or woman. She grew up a queenly woman in appearance; was very intelligent, modest, but not diffident, full of energy, with a quick and cutting wit, and a self-possession which was never disturbed by any occurrence. She was so fond of pistol-shooting that she became remarkable for her accuracy, and the press noticed this frequently and not always as respectfully as her father thought it should. This called a card from him which contained a delicate warning that it should forbear even the mention of his daughter's name for the future. Never after were they alluded to.

"A THOUSAND anecdotes might be related of the daring intrepidity of Rezin P. Bowie, his coolness in the most trying moments, his indifference to danger and his generous forbearance to a foe once in his power. In him was eminently combined the moral and the physical which constitutes true courage. There was no malice in his nature. He never hated, for he never feared. He held a bully in contempt, because he despised pretensions of every kind.

"The death of his brother affected him more than was apparent to the common observer. His physician remarked to me, a year after the event, that the death of James Bowie was killing Rezin. His daughters married soon after completing their education. They married cousins, men of high position, who were wealthy. This broke up the family. After this he gradually withdrew from the associations of his better days and, in 1838, died, in the fortieth year of his age.

"BOTH these brothers were entirely exempt from every species of dissipation; never drank, never gambled, or indulged in any immoral or debasing habit. Rezin P. Bowie really was a great man; his intellect was eminently superior; he perceived quickly, and reasoned with great perspicuity and cogency; his language was beautiful, his wit pungent and polished, and his illustrations always apposite and palpable; his form was perfect, erect, and tall, and perfectly proportioned; his manner always graceful, but never effeminate; his muscular strength enormous. His most remarkable feature was his eye; with the exception of S. S. Prentiss, it was the most variant in expression of any I ever met.

"There was a marked similarity in the minds of these two men. Prentiss was the most eloquent as an orator, Bowie was his superior as a conversationalist. They both elucidated their ideas by apposite anecdotes and figures drawn from surrounding objects. Both were coolly brave, and eminently generous. The difference was more in education than in capacity. Prentiss condensed, Bowie amplified. Prentiss used more Saxon words, Bowie more Norman, polishing the asperity of the thought. Prentiss struck with the two-handed sword of 'Richard Cœur de Lion," Bowie cut with the keenness of the scimeter of Aladdin. Prentiss was ambitious; Bowie, entirely without ambition, was indifferent to the fascinations of public applause, or the seductions of public office.

"Such was Rezin P. Bowie, as I knew him, and yet the world, away from his acquaintance, but heard of him only as a bold and desperate man, without scruples, and delighting in blood. A more tender and affectionate nature never lived. A more faithful friend, kinder neighbor, loving husband and father in all my long life I have never known.

"IT WAS my good fortune to know all the men who were most prominent as actors in conceiving and carrying through to success the revolution of Texas. All of these were extraordinary men, many of them were highly educated as well as talented; all were honest and earnest of purpose, and, fortunately, none of them were rich. I say fortunately, for rich men never inaugurate or execute a revolution. They come to love their money more than their country, and to better the condition politically of the latter is to struggle against the tyrannies of those who control the government and to hazard their money. It is the enterprising, liberty-loving poor man, oppressed by tyrannical exactions, who is without the means to control or bribe power, who strikes to be free. Wealth is cautious and conservative, and rather bears those ills it has, than fly to those it knows not of.

"Of the men most conspicuous in this revolution, Houston combined more of the elements of greatness than any other. Lamar had more genius, more chivalry, and was brave to rashness, but he was wanting in practical prudence. The impetuosity of his genius too frequently overrode the cooler dictates of his judgment. Talent seems an inheritance in this family. There has not been a time within the last century that there has not been a great man in it. And now, the first orator, and one of the foremost statesmen of the South, and perhaps of the nation, is L. Q. C. Lamar, of Mississippi, the nephew of the late Mirabeau B. Lamar.

"Lamar, Houston, and Fannin were Georgians, all of them the schoolmates of my boyhood, Crockett and the Whartons were Tennesseans; Bowie was born in the same State, but was reared in Louisiana; Austin was a Missourian, and Branch Archer from Virginia. Every one of these were men formed by nature to be leaders. Their enterprise was daring, and their intrepidity made it successful. They wrested from Mexico a dominion larger than the kingdom of France, and, though all died poor, they bequeathed to posterity a fame unstained by crime or corruption—a boon worth more than all which fraud and venality can ever bequeath."

THE following incident was told by a Methodist preacher some years ago:

"He said he was one of the first Methodist ministers sent to Texas by the Methodist Conference. He traveled on horseback, crossing the Mississippi below Natchez, that the first day after crossing the Mississippi River he was overtaken by a horseman dressed in buckskin, armed with rifle, pistol, and knife. They entered into conversation, and he found him to be intelligent, pleasant, and well acquainted with the geography of the country. Neither one inquired the name or business of each other. Both were aiming at the same destination, Texas. Finally they reached a new town, filled with wild, desperate characters from other States. He posted a notice that he would preach at the court-house the first evening of his arrival there. At the hour named he found the rude structure thronged to overflowing—with men only. He gave out a hymn, and all joined in singing, and sung it well, but when he announced his text and attempted to preach, one brayed in imitation of an ass, another hooted like an owl, etc. He disliked to be driven from his purpose, and attempted again to preach, but was stopped by the same species of interruption. He stood silent and still, not knowing whether to vacate the pulpit or not. Finally, his traveling companion, whom he did not know was in the house, arose in the midst, and with stentorious voice said:

" 'Men, this man has come here to preach to you. You need preaching to, and I'll be —— if he sha'n't preach to you! The next man that disturbs him shall fight me. My name is Jim Bowie.'

"The preacher said that after this announcement he never had a more attentive and respectful audience, so much influence had Bowie over that reckless and dangerous element."

RESPECTING the invention of the famous Bowie knife, an intimate lady friend of the Bowie family, in a note to the writer, under date of December, 1878, and written in New Orleans, says:

"The knife was invented by Rezin P., brother of James, for the purpose of hunting wild cattle on the plains of the Opelousas. The first one was manufactured by one of his slaves at the private blacksmith-shop on his plantation. It was never intended for any other use except that of a simple hunting-knife, nor was it ever used otherwise, until in the duel at Natchez, when James Bowie acted as second, and all the seconds were drawn into the fight. James Bowie married Ursulita de Veramendez, who was the only daughter of the governor of that name, and although born at Monclova, was of Castillian origin. Santa Anna was her godfather, and it is said that when all the bodies of the brave men slain at the Alamo were burned, Santa Anna caused that of James Bowie to be interred instead, but would allow no mark to be placed on the grave. This was to prevent his family reclaiming his body. At that time Mrs. James Bowie and her child were already deceased.

"The State House at Austin contains a large and excellent painting of James Bowie, who has a nephew living in Austin, and another one in Galveston. Their mother, the daughter of Rezin P. Bowie, resided in Galveston with her son, Major John S. Moore."

HERE is another line on Bowie and the Bowie knife. I've written to the *Arkansas Gazette*, but there hasn't yet been time for reply.

Fort Smith, Arkansas.

I noticed the request of Mr. Hugh J. Bowie concerning his somewhat illustrious relative Col. James Bowie.

I DO not care to cast any slight upon Colonel Bowie whatever, and the point I raise is really immaterial anyway, but seeing that the present Mr. Bowie really wishes information upon the colonel I refer him to the centennial issue of the *Arkansas Gazette*, published at Little Rock, Ark., which same was issued this year (1920). In this centennial number he will find an article upon the *bowie knife* itself. The article takes up the origin of the knife and claims it was first conceived and made by a man by name of Black, a blacksmith by trade. The illustrious Colonel Bowie upon first seeing the knife was so struck with its "possibilities" that he immediately ordered one (and in time used several) and due to his own bravery and skill, he made the knife famous as a fighting weapon whereupon it became known as a bowie knife instead of by the name of its originator.

As to the authenticity of this article I know not. I suppose application to the *Arkansas Gazette* would bring forth information upon the matter and possibly data upon James Bowie himself.—J. FRIEND.

THREE more Camp-Fire stations have been added to the list. Here they are:

California—Col. Wm. Strover, Westlake Military School, Mt. Washington, Los Angeles.
New York—St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., the Bronx.
Washington—Ed. L. Carson, Burlington.

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THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules,* thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

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In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

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This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 519 Citizens Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

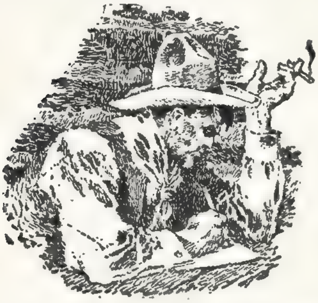
Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure.")

Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for Ask *Adventure*, but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. Ask *Adventure* covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

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CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1305 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

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RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

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6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine, Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Early history of Missouri Valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
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9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
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19. North American Snow Countries. Part 7
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22. Central America
Edgar Young, care *Adventure* magazine, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

23. South America. Part 1
Edgar Young, care *Adventure* magazine, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile; geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

24. South America Part 2
P. H. Goldsmith, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

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26. Philippine Islands
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27. Japan
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Major A. M. Lochwitzky (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing, explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

29. Africa Part 1
Thomas S. Miller, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

30. Africa Part 2
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31. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
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32. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
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Tom L. Mills, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen. (*Postage 8 cents.*)

35. South Sea Islands of French Oceania
Charles Brown, Jr., 213 E Street, San Rafael, California. Covering Tahiti and the Society Islands, the Paumotu or Pearl Islands, and the Marquesas. Geography, natives, history, language, customs, travel, equipment, climate, produce, trading, pearl-diving, living conditions and expenses; sports, vanilla and coconut culture.

36. ★ Australia and Tasmania
Albert Goldie, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the Ask *Adventure* editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. Thompson, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. Wiggins, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. Thompson, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S. its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents—in Mr. Mills' case 8 cents—in stamps NOT attached)*

Hiking in South America

HERE is a wealth of valuable tips, many of which are not to be found in books. Also a glimpse at an interesting character indeed—a Southern ex-slave who became a millionaire mine-owner:

Question:—"With a friend I am contemplating a trip through Central America. Both of us have hit the trail in Mexico, Peru, and other places, and are fairly familiar with the Spanish language, with the problems of living in the tropics, and with the customs of the Latin-American people.

Our plans are vague; but in a general way we intend to meet at Guatemala City, and travel on foot or on muleback to San José, Costa Rica. My own object is to see the country. My companion, being a mining engineer, may wish to do a little prospecting along the way, although his chief object is adventure. Can you give me some advice on the following points:

1.—Do you know of any trails that will take us from Guatemala City to San Salvador, thence to Tegucigalpa, thence to Managua, and thence to San José?

2.—Will these trails take us into altitudes where we will need heavy clothing during the day, or more than one blanket at night?

3.—Can one depend for food upon the natives along the way, or will it be necessary in places to carry our own provisions? Both of us have learned to eat monkey-meat and turtle-eggs as a last resource.

4.—My pal wants to travel on muleback. Personally I have found it easier to travel on foot, driving a pack-animal, and prefer to do so. What do you think about it?

5.—We plan to start at the end of October—at the beginning of the dry season. Could we reach San José before the heavy rains commence? Providing we can not do so, are the trails passable after the rainy season sets in?

6.—While familiar with the precautions to be taken against fever and disease, and have already roughed it to some extent, we lay no claim to the title of "old-timers," and if you have any further advice to offer, it will be welcomed.

May I indorse your tribute to the T. T. T. (Typical Tropical Tramps) which appeared in the First January issue, 1921. Two years ago, when I first went into Mexico as a newspaper correspondent, I knocked them as chronic bums; later, on the West Coast of South America I became one of them, and am proud of it."—HARRY L. FOSTER, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—1.—There is a road leaving Zacapa, a freight terminal on the railroad from Puerto Barrios to Guatemala City, that meanders off over into Honduras and Salvador. This is an ox-cart road. There is another road, so-called, leaving the same line of railroad at Morales, between Zacapa and Guatemala City, and goes to Honduras, passing by the famous placer mine of "Nigger" Knight, now dead (Knight), one of the few placer mines of Guatemala that have amounted to anything.

Nigger Knight, the slave of an Alabama owner, after becoming free went down there and stumbled upon this mine, which has produced several millions. He educated his daughters in England and France. They were all very refined people. He is said to have disowned a daughter who married a native Guatemalan, his one desire being that he could get some decent white men to marry them.

The son of his former owner was hard up here in the States, and Knight brought him down and is said to have given him a half interest in the mine.

Knight was not called "Nigger" from any aspersions as to color but as a friendly title. He was a very polite old man, and had several white men work for him at various times. He also stood ace high with all T. T. T.'s

If I am not mistaken Franck followed the road from Zacapa and wrote an account of it in his "Tramping through Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras." I do not remember hearing of any road on the western side of Guatemala that leads to Honduras. If there is such a road it will be found at or near Esquintla. Franck gave it up in Honduras and took the auto road from Tegucigalpa to Amapala.

Roads from either Honduras or Salvador to Nicaragua are merely pack-mule paths. I know that there are such paths, for we had several of our agents on the F. C. del P. de Nicaragua abscond with funds and take this trail from some point on our line, Masaya or Leon, probably. However, 'most every one does what Franck did and takes the boat from Amapala to Corinto. Arriving there, we have the railroad all the way to Granada with fairly good passenger service. This takes you to Lake Nicaragua. There are steamers operated by the railroad company (if they have not been discontinued) all the way across this lake and down the San Juan.

Now then: at either the mouth of the San Carlos or Sarapiqui (forget which) there is a line of very small boats that go on up until a road is encountered which leads to San José, Costa Rica. It is about six hundred miles, as the crow flies, from Guatemala City, or Zacapa, to San José, C. R. It is over a thousand with the meanderings of the roads. All of it can be made by trail by following trails and roads from town to town and keeping the general direction you wish to follow. If I were going to make it all the way by trail, I would not depend on roads but would hit the hills with a compass and map and save time in the long run.

There is a good map, forty feet square, built of cement, at the race-track in Guatemala City that will give you a fine idea of this republic. It is one of the best pieces of work of this kind in the world, it is claimed.

2.—No. Light corduroy, one blanket for sleeping under, a dog tent.

3.—If you take the highway for it you will find little shops, just a window in a house with a shelf, for travelers. Time was when a man could get two eggs, tortillas, and meat for five cents American money (1 peso billete). When hitting country away from trails it is well to carry a supply of beans, dried meat, rice, etc., just to make sure of a feed. I carried no feed on a hike of three weeks and usually managed to find some one to sell me a feed when I needed it, with a few exceptions.

4.—I have also found I made better time on foot. Good Indian packers can be hired all over Guatemala who will outpack and outwalk a mule. However the majority of these fellows are on the Pacific side.

They are bound to hire themselves out to any man wishing them; it is some sort of agreement they have with the government. If they refuse, it is only necessary to call on the authorities, who will clap several in jail and hold them until you pick which one you want.

5.—You can reach San José if you keep going before the weather gets wet. It depends, of course, on many things. The first three hundred miles are the worst, and a man is speaking (ego, this) who walked four hundred and eighty miles in less than two weeks without making a halt, and who has walked several thousand miles.

If a man holds up to walk three hundred miles and keeps well he gets hard as nails and can walk a mule to death. I have walked as many as fifty-one miles in a daylight day, and on the last few miles played out a man who fell in with us to show us the road.

Franck was all in when he hit Tegucigalpa. If he had rested up and then made another start he would have made it all the way to Panama. He also tried to travel too fast on the beginning.

It is better to start out making fifteen miles a day and finish making thirty per day than to start out doing forty and then either not finish or have to lay up sick for a couple of weeks. Fifteen miles per day for thirty days equals four hundred and fifty miles. Two months of this will put a man to San José.

6.—I have found that the principal thing a man needs when walking is *feet*. Ye gods, how I have suffered with my feet before I learned how to protect them. A man should take better care of his feet than a lady takes of her hands when he considers that if one of them goes on the bum the other is little use; and he only has two.

A man should have heavy shoes that have been *well* broken and then half-soled. They should be at least one size larger than he wears, and he should take several pairs of extra-heavy yarn socks. At noon he should remove his shoes, wash his feet, turn his socks wrong side out, dry them and put them on wrong side out. At night he should change for another pair and should wash socks and other clothing along the trail, using good strong soap and "boiling up" to kill itch and other germs at least once a week.

Socks and shoes. Those are the first things a man should consider.

I found riding-breeches rather hot around the legs in the tropics. I wore a pair from Mexico all the way to Guatemala. I found much more comfort with high-top shoes and overalls stuffed in same.

Snakes? Not as many as there are down home in Virginia. I slept out for seven months and never had a snake bother me.

The worst that I had was an armadillo that ran over my face one night in Costa Rica. The next worst was a puma that stalked around and around one night near the Mexican border; and I couldn't get a shot at him.

Central America has no books of recent years dealing with present conditions. What has been done for South America by C. R. Enoch and other English (subsidized) writers should be done for Central America. Books that you can consult are notable for their non-existence. You will have to fall back on Squier's works for Honduras and Nicaragua. Walker for Guatemala. And a few others.

Get in touch with the Pan-American Union and get what they have to offer on the various countries. Also note other leads in the list I am attaching.

A man in traveling through the Central American countries will meet with many small inconveniences, as is to be expected. At times a man may feel as Frederick Palmer did when he wrote his book about a trip he made across one of the countries by train and mule.

However, these countries, primitive though they may be at present, offer a Go-South-Young-Man for the front rank of pioneers, the sort of men who explored the West thoroughly and were able to tell expeditions such as the Lewis and Clark just what roads and trails to follow. Also it is poor business to knock.

From many years among them I have found that their heart is in the right place, at any rate, and I would like to see Americans settle down there, farm, and help develop these rich countries.

California land is worth a thousand an acre; and a man can get a couple of thousand acres for the price of one California acre in 'most any of these countries just by getting back a way from the larger cities.

Also no man knows just how much gold is to be found in the mountains of any of them. Most of the present workings are reopenings of old Spanish workings. No systematic prospecting has ever been done in any of them.

I think I read that knock against the T. T. T. you spoke of. They get a few now and then; but it doesn't generally reach them without it's accidental. I hope a few of them get wind of the fact that I have put one over in their behalf, the first that ever reached print I think. There is a man down there named Jim Brown, a bridge-builder, who has fed an even million of us.

Tump-Line Packs

THEY enable a man to carry more over a longer distance, probably, than any other harness adapted to the human male. A tump-line is, of course, a line passed across the forehead or chest to help a fellow carry the load on his back:

Question:—"To settle a dispute would you please give me your opinion on the following question:

A says he has seen a guide carry three hundred pounds on a tump-line for a mile without stopping on a bush trail.

B says it is impossible."—A. R. J., Montreal, Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—There is no doubt but that the Indian and breed carriers of Canada are able to carry three hundred pounds even to greater distances than a mile, without stopping, over the woods trails. The Indian carriers of the Andes range, in South America, habitually carry two hundred pounds on their backs, mile after mile at their plodding gait. The tump-line harness permits larger packs than shoulder-straps, it is said.

I have myself helped load three hundred and twenty-five pounds on the head of a Tennessee River roustabout for him to scramble ashore and up a steep bank with it. Really the human animal is a most extraordinary burden-carrier when he is accustomed to it from childhood, as in the wilderness.

In acknowledging Mr. Spears' letter, A. R. J. adds the following information:

"Of course I knew I was right as I loaded an Indian standing six feet four and broad in proportion, with two flour sacks, a fifty-pound slab of bacon and more than fifty pounds of smaller truck.

This was on the Nottaway about one hundred miles this side of James Bay."

Books on Seamanship and Navigation

"PRACTISE makes perfect," of course; but theory is the handmaid of practise, and sometimes her guide:

Question:—"Will you please advise me of some books covering ships, seamanship and navigation?" —Andrew Whiteley, Ambles, Penn.

Answer, by Mr. Beriah Brown:—"Luce's Seamanship" is the best American authority on seamanship and rigging for sailing-vessels, while Knight's "Modern Seamanship" is the standard authority on steam seamanship. Both are written for naval uses, and while valuable are not adequate for the needs of the merchant seaman. Probably Nares' "Seamanship," an English publication, would be of more value to the merchant sailor.

For elementary works on navigation Henderson's "Navigation," published by Harpers, or Mayor's "Navigation," published by Lippincotts, would meet your requirements. The American works on seamanship referred to are published by D. Van Nostrand Co., New York.

Rapa, the Paradise of the Male

AN ISLAND of the Pacific where the men don't even have to lift the food to their mouths:

Question:—"Having seen your name listed in "Ask Adventure" as being an authority on the Hawaiian Islands, I am taking the liberty of writing you. I will explain in detail just what I want to know, and then if I have you guessing just say so. There will be no hard feelings.

I am twenty-two years old. Have a high-school education. Am an automobile mechanic by trade. Single, of course. Have traveled through western United States and seen real honest-to-God hard work.

I read the other day that with a thousand dollars a man could go to the Hawaiian Islands and buy land which would produce enough for a living (existence) with practically no work. Who owns the land in the islands?

Are they so thoroughly Americanized on some of the smaller islands that it would be impossible for a man to go down there and just "stagnate" (with limitations) for a few years? What I would like to do is just to hole up some place and loaf with no work or anything to worry about.

Now if you get my drift and can offer any suggestions I would surely appreciate them. Are there any ways down there of making an easy living? Trading or anything that way?

If you think I'm a little off my nut you needn't answer this. I'm simply disgusted with this eternal hurrying around and would like to try something different for a while."—R. J. Pielemeirer, Indianapolis, Ind.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—I am afraid that you are confusing the Hawaiian Islands with some other South Pacific islands as every one who wants to gain livelihood in Hawaii has to work more or less for it and as no white man with any self-respect would care to become what is known as a "beachcomber," whether it be in Hawaii or elsewhere.

There is an island called Rapa which is one thousand miles from any other land, on the Tropic of Capricorn, off the west coast of South America, where there are one hundred fifty women and twenty men. It is always open season for a husband there, and women lie awake at nights studying methods of capturing the affections of the masculine population. A man is fed without having to handle the food; and it is possible that this was the island you read about.

I certainly can not advise any one to sojourn anywhere where he will stagnate; and while I sympathize with your desire to take things easy and with your disgust of the "eternal hurrying around," I am afraid that an ambitious young man of twenty-two years would probably kick himself for the rest of his life if he were to waste some years in some South Sea island with nothing to do.

More about Watch-Pistols

THE little item we printed a few issues back seems to have stirred up considerable interest. Below are two typical responses, with answers by Mr. Wiggins. To other friends who wrote in on the subject we offer our thanks; the only reason their letters are not printed here is that they would merely reaffirm what these correspondents have to say.

Paul L. Anderson of East Orange, N. J., writes:

The inquiry by G. A. Graham, with reply by Mr. Wiggins, in the First-December number of *Adventure*, reminds me of a weapon which might perhaps be described as a watch-pistol.

It was about the size and shape of one of the larger Ingersolls, had a barrel about half an inch long protruding from one side, and on the other side a sort of trigger arrangement. If I remember correctly, it took a .32 short pistol cartridge, and when the affair was held in the palm of the hand, with the barrel sticking out between the middle and ring fingers, a firm squeeze of the whole hand caused the cartridge to be discharged. The bullet thereupon left the gun and went rambling around the landscape, somewhere or other, mostly other.

As a general-purpose gun it was somewhat less useful than a derringer, but it was probably the most convenient implement ever devised for shooting a hole in the owner's hand. I never owned one, and never had any ambition to do so, either.

I do not know whether or not it is still manufactured, nor do I know who made it—or why. However, if this information is of any interest to Mr.

Graham, Mr. Wiggins, or any other of your readers, here it is. So far as I remember, the pistol in question had no face, hands, or other indications of a watch except size and shape.—PAUL L. ANDERSON, East Orange, N. J.

To Mr. Anderson, Mr. Wiggins replies:

I recall a firearm somewhat on the lines you describe. It was made for or by some armsmaker in Chicago, and called the Chicago Squeezer, if I recall correctly. It was only suited to short range, and depended upon instinctive pointing even then. The barrel was held between the two middle fingers, and a projection was gripped by the palm of the hand to fire it. It shot a small weak .32 cartridge.

Firearms are, and have been, made in curious combinations—the better to fool the festive footpad, I presume. I have seen knife-pistols, both muzzle and breech-loading, and know of at least one pistol made to resemble a camera. Cane-guns, both air and powder using, are made abroad, and I have shot one made in the form of a fountain pen. It shot the .32 short Smith & Wesson shell, and was unrifled.

Police officers view these freak arms with extreme disgust, and a man caught with one on his person is apt to draw a heavier penalty than the party who is caught nursing a .45 in his garments. You will readily see the reason. Same way with knives and knucks, slungshots, and other freak and silent weapons.

A technical description of the weapon is furnished by Seth Wiard, a firearms expert of Bridgeport, Conn.:

The watch-pistol was also known here as a bicycle revolver, is about the size of an old-fashioned railroad watch, has a barrel about an inch or slightly less long, takes a .32 cal. extra short rim-fire cartridge, and holds seven shots. A plate on the side slips off, and it is loaded from the middle. The name of it is the Protector, and I think that it was made in Chicago.

The arm is to be held in the hand, with the first and second fingers each side of the short barrel and the rest of the apparatus fits into the palm. There is a projecting rib, curved in conformity with the round case, that fits the lower part of the palm in somewhat a similar fashion that the grip safety on a Colt Auto fits into your hand between the thumb and forefinger.

As this is compressed by squeezing the hand, the rib carries an internal piece forward, which rotates the drum magazine in the inside, until a cartridge gets in line with the barrel, then compresses the firing-spring and releases it, thus firing the arm. I do not believe that any comments upon the accuracy of the weapon are necessary, as a derringer is a long-range target weapon compared with this.

In the mean time Mr. Wiggins seems to have investigated the matter further, for his reply to Mr. Wiard furnishes still additional information:

I have found in Major Pollard's book, "The Book of the Pistol," a description of a real watch-pistol, one made in Europe, I think. I gather from the description that it is really a close imitation of a watch, with only a small short barrel where the watch-stem would be.

I recall the Chicago Squeezer; have handled but never fired one. They were, as you say, a weapon made for the shortest range, and the weak cartridge made them a very undesirable weapon at best. Personally when I walk abroad among the wild ones, I pack a Colt .41 caliber, the old D. A. model, with the hammer spur cut off to insure against a catch in the pocket lining or hem. And is it a pocket gun? I'll say so.

Hog-Raising in Florida

RUNNING a hog-ranch is a fine, healthful, outdoor occupation; but it may make a poor man of the rancher if he lacks experience and capital:

Question:—"For reasons of health I am forced to go South, Florida being the State recommended by my doctor. I thought if I could get some government land I could go into the hog industry or something similar. I have four hundred dollars capital, and believe that is sufficient to start. Can you give me any information on this subject?

Is there still any government land that is worth anything? And about the climate. What are the usual degrees that the thermometer indicates?

I am single and have no dependents; consequently I travel alone."—CHARLES FLICK, Mt. Kisco, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—There is not much free land that has not one or more serious drawbacks, left in Florida, I believe. Write the Commissioner of General Land Office, Washington, D. C., and ask for Circular No. 608 (Vacant Public Lands on July 1, 1918), and Circular No. 541 (Suggestions to Homesteaders and Persons Desiring to Make Homestead Entries). Also write Mr. Robt. W. Davis, Land Office, Gainesville, Florida, and ask for information concerning the best free lands left in Florida.

Hogs are raised down here, but a good many men have figured themselves rich on paper at hog-raising and gone broke in the actual practise of it. It usually runs about like this: A hundred pigs at five dollards each; eight months on a rotation of such crops as rape, peanuts, chufas and velvet beans; a hundred hogs at forty dollars each. They never figure on disease, and they never take into account the fact that some feed of the dry kind must be bought, and that sort of feed down here is very high in price.

With only four hundred dollars, perhaps you'd better not try hogs until you've been down here for long enough to get acquainted with things.

As to the climate. It is immense. The hottest I've ever seen it was ninety-eight, which we had but once last year. Ordinarily the Summers are not at all bad, though they are very long. In the Winters the temperature is usually just comfortable, but sometimes oil stoves come in good. I believe the average January temperature is around sixty; average July temperature around eighty-one. Freezes are very rare, and there are usually only a few light frosts each Winter.

This is for central Florida, you understand. It will run a little warmer south of here, and a little colder north of here.

LOST TRAILS

Note—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

McKEE, A. L. Height six feet, brown hair, blue eyes, weighs about 215 pounds. Last heard of in hospital in Wichita, Kansas. Is an old navy man. Age about thirty years. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address W. R. McKee, 215 Durrell St., Findlay, Ohio.

MURRELL, BUTLER E. Last heard from in Billings, Mont., twelve years ago. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to his brother.—Address Thomas H. Murrell, 1423 East Lincoln Park, Wellington, Kansas.

REED, FORREST B. Father. Born at Fort Ticonderoga, N. Y., 1857. Has white hair, and a bright red mustache. Last heard from in Ray, Arizona, where he worked as a switch-tower operator. "Dad" write to your son.—Address H. W. Reed, Auburn, Me.

SCHULKY, FRED. Left Detroit in April, 1917. Thought he went to California. Your whereabouts confidential. Please write to your sister.—Address Augusta Jardine, West Branch, Mich.

WILKINSON, CHARLES. Last heard of near Spokane, Washington. Write to the Administratrix of your sister's estate.—Address Mrs. Helen W. Hatchell, Administratrix of Estate of the late Florence Wilkinson Nicolini, Box 1431, Honolulu, Hawaii.

LINC. Please write. On my honor, nobody touches my mail and I want to hear from you.—Vic, 1920 E. 4th St., Los Angeles, Cal.

SPEILMAN, AL. Of Chicago, Ill. Last heard of at the Flying-School, Chanute Field, Ill. Please write to your old pal.—G. W. Gram, 27th Balloon Co., U. S. A. S., Fort Mills, Manila, Philippine Islands.

ECKERT, WARREN. Clint died November 17, 1920. Write your mother at old home or get into communication with me. Last heard of in Akron, Ohio, working at rubber trade.—Address Jack Langletz, 615 South Plum St., Lancaster, Pa.

WOULD like to know the whereabouts of (Baldy) Jack Tettle, Frank Burns, Dave Scarbourgh, Burns Harney and Dick Horton, or any of the boys of Pack Train 308-9-10 or M. T. C. who remember the Hotel De Spainol and Hotel De Stallion at Amboise Forest, France. Please write.—Peter Graf and Carl Rokoski, 351 West 44th St., New York, N. Y.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

GOLDSTEIN, SAMUEL. SUMSKY, HERMAN. On April 29, 1918, left Baltimore for Washington to get a position. Have not heard from them since. Samuel Goldstein is about five feet ten inches tall, dark hair and eyes and light complexion, age about twenty. Herman Sumsky is about twenty-four years, five feet three inches tall, dark hair and eyes and dark complexion. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Leon Goldstein, 1802 East Lombard St., Batimore, Md.

FEENEY, Frank, Catherine, Mary, Ellen, Margaret, Thomas and William. Children of Frank Feeney, Sr. Their father's friend, William L. Everett, who left Cokeburg, Pa. in 1912 and moved to Berkeley Springs, W. Va., would like to hear from them or any one who knows their whereabouts.—Address William L. Everett, P. O. Box 398, Berkeley Springs, W. Va.

RETHWISCH, PVT. HERMAN K. Co. H. 26th Inf. 1st. Div. Was reported missing in action, and later officially presumed to be dead. Would be glad to hear from any one who could give me any information concerning him.—Address Mother. Mrs. H. Rethwisch, 1518 Christy Ave., Louisville, Ky.

DONLEY, GEORGE D. Ex-soldier. Last heard of on November 19, 1919. Was at 1094 Third Avenue, New York City. Any information will be appreciated by his widowed mother.—Address Mrs. C. L. Donley, Giotto, W. Va.

TURBEVILLE, CLEM. Left his home in South Carolina immediately after Civil War. Supposed to have gone west, probably Arkansas. He was about eighteen or twenty years of age when he disappeared. Would appreciate any information concerning him. If any of the Turbevilles of Arkansas see this please write; we may be related.—Address Mrs. P. B. Lunney, 47 Nassau St., Charleston, S. C.

WILL any member of crew of U. S. *Monitor, Tallahassee* or other U. S. vessel that called at Bermuda between 1915-1919 who remembers Fred Taylor of St. George's, Bermuda, please write to him at 94 Linsmore Cres, Toronto, Ont., Canada.

BOWMAN, DANIEL. Father. Was glass-blower at Warick, Ohio, when glass-plant was there. Thought to be in Davenport, Pa. Papa if you see this write to me; would like to know where you are and how you are getting along.—Address Mrs. Bernice E. Ferney, 617 Garfield Ave., Orrville, Ohio.

LINDGREN, MATHIAS. Father. Missing fourteen years. Last seen in Spokane, Washington. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address Waldemar Lindgren, 319 9th Ave., South, St. Cloud, Minn.

PENLAND, A. C. Son of Mrs. C. W. Penland of 1123 Laredo Ave., Corpus Christi, Texas. Last heard of in Oklahoma City, Okla. in 1919. Was about nineteen years old. Has a birth-mark on cheek resembling a fish. Please write to your broken-hearted mother.—Address F. E. Penland, 439 Main St., Niagara Falls, N. Y.

ANY members of Co. B. 52nd Inf. once stationed at Chicamauga Park, Ga. Co. L. 321st Inf. 81st Div. "Wild-Cat," "Stonewall," once at Camps Jackson and Sevier, S. Carolina. Co. G. and 7th Co. 1st Prov. D. Bn.. 156th D. B. Camp Sevier, S. C., write to Top-Kicker.—Albert E. Lupien, Munising, Mich.

NIRGEL, COOPER. Your old pal Pinkey is to be discharged soon. Write me at home-address.—H. W. Rounds, Newcastle, Wash.

CLARKE, JIM. Sometimes goes by the name of Joe Bussick. Age about nineteen. Formerly of Vancouver, B. C. Canada. Last heard of in Aberdeen, Wash. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address HARRY THIM, Box 89, Route 2, Enumclaw, Wash.

BUSHNELL, LOWMAN CHESTER. Chas. B. has gone to Fla. Would like very much to hear from you. Address your brother, W. E. BUSHNELL, Sequim, Wash.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH: Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Byron Chisholm; Wm. S. Hilles; A. B. Paradis; G. E. Hungerford; E. E. S. Atkins; E. Murphy; A. Gaylord; E. J. Moran; F. S. Emerson; H. E. Warner; L. E. Patten; T. T. Bennett; Sinn Cardie; James Mosse; C. E. Wilson; R. W. Kimsey.

THE following have been inquired for in either the Mid-March or first April issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

ASKINS, IRA V.; Bonie, Louis Terea; Broone, Oscar; Brown, Walter R.; Burke, John Sterling; Burks, Thomas Shafter; Clark, Joe; Clarke, Gilbert Van Antwerpt; Clems, Thornton; Colton, James M.; Davoren, Jack; Dorpema, Jack; Erickson, Carl J.; Evans, Welconie Lafayette; Farrell, Bartholomew; Gardiner, Ex. Pte.; George; Goldstein, Samuel; Gunter, James; Hoffman, John; Jack; Kindling, Louis; King, Jim; La Pine, Andrew, J.; Larson, Franklin S.; Lenz, Charley; Mack or Martin, Robert; Magnus, Alf; McBain, C. Hutson; McLaure, E. J.; Meager, Thomas F.; Morris, Wm. E.; Noden, William M.; Palmer, James; Phillips, Bryan; Richards, Jack C.; Sandberg, William; Sohn, Sollie; Stanfield, Ross; Stanley, Francis; Sullivan, Dave D.; Sullivan, Thomas; Sumsky, Herman; Thomas, Henry; Warner, George; Westman, Andrew August; Wilson, Robert E.; Worner, Henry.

MISCELLANEOUS: Friends and relatives of Fred J. Noonan: G. H.; Men and Officers of 2nd Canadian Construction Batt.; Men who served in late war at Halifax during time of explosion.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ALDRIDGE, F. P.; Allen, Paul; Beaton, G. M.; Mr. and Mrs. Bennett; Benson, E. N.; Bertsch, Miss Elizabeth; Blighton, Frank, Bonner, J. S.; Bromell, Mr.; Buckley, Ray; Campbell, Maurice Viele; Carpenter, Robert S.; Carr, John; Chisholm, D. F. K.; Clark, Ernest S.; Cleve, Jim; Clingham, Charles; Coles, Bobby; Connor, A. M.; Cook, Elliot, D.; Cook, William N.; Corbett, Fred P.; Curtis, D. A.; Courtlandt, Victor; Fisher, 1st, Sgt. R.; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter J.; Hoffman, J. M.; Howard, Charlie; Hughes, Frank E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Irving, Thos. L.; Jackson, Robert R.; Klug, Chas. C.; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kutcher, Sgt. Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lanahan, Robert; Lancaster, C. E.; Lander, Harry; Larisey, Jack; Lee, Capt. Harry; Lee, Wm. R., M.D.; Lonely Jock; Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonald, Tony; MacKaye, D. C.; Mackintosh, D. T. A.; Mendelson, Aleck; Nelson, Frank Lovell; Nylander, Towne, J.; O'Hara, Jack; Olmstead, Harry E.; Parker, Dr. M.; Parker, G. A.; Parrott, Pvt. D. C.; Phillips, Buffington; Phipps, Corbett C.; Pigeon, A H.; Raines, Wm. L.; Rich, Wagoner Bob; Rogan, Chas. B.; Rundle, Merrill G.; St. Clair, Fred; Schmidt, G.; Scott, James F.; Smith, C. O.; Starr, Ted.; Soloway, Jack M.; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Ward, Frank B.; Wiley, Floyd; Williams Capt. W. P.; J. C. H.; W. W. T.; S. 177284; L. T. 439; WS-XV.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address L. B. BARRETTO, care of *Adventure.*

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FIRST MAY ISSUE

In addition to the two complete novelettes and the serial story mentioned on the second contents page, the following stories come to you in the next issue:

GUNS OF THE GODS A Five-Part Story Conclusion ***Talbot Mundy***
Who are the hundred Treasure-guardians of Sialpore?

THE TRUMPETER ***Arthur O. Friel***
Brazilians and Yankee meet in the jungle.

A SIXTY-THOUSAND-DOLLAR TINTYPE ***Clyde B. Hough***
A man-hunt through the foot-hills.

THE PATH OF A KING Each story complete in itself ***John Buchan***

XI The Lighted Chamber
The strain of noble blood shows through its thin disguise.

XII In the Dark Land
When Kentucky was "The Dark and Bloody Ground."

THE POT OF GOLD ***Chester L. Saxby***
The *Samson* picks up a derelict.

CUSTOMS OF THE SERVICE ***Edwin L. Sabin***
The Army metes out justice.

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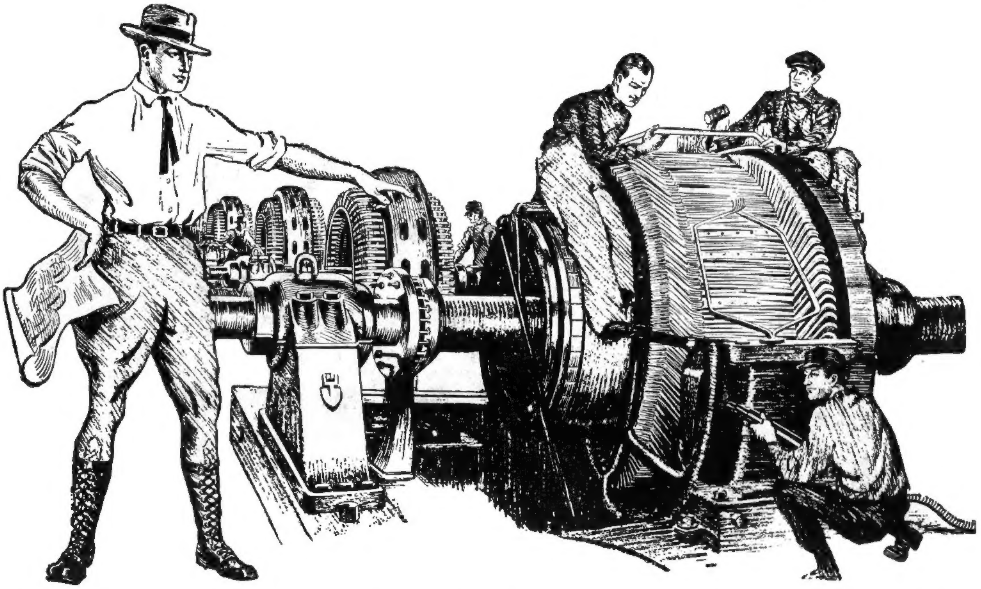

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